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## Oxfordshire

### A rare masterpiece

Kingston Lisle. Didcot 13 miles (London Paddington from 43 minutes), central London 76 miles  
Stunning Grade II\* listed Georgian house at the heart of a magical estate. Hall, 5 reception rooms. Master bedroom suite, 7 first floor bedrooms, 4 further second floor bedrooms. Beautiful gardens, swimming pool, tennis court, lakes, parkland with private golf course and 4 cottages. Mixed woodland and arable land. Excellent shoot. About 257 acres.

**Guide price: £21,000,000**

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# jackson-stops.co.uk



## Suffolk Near Ipswich

A stunning Georgian former rectory, refurbished to the highest of standards, with secondary accommodation standing in 6 acres of grounds.

- 5 reception rooms ● Orangery ● Kitchen/breakfast room ● 7 bedrooms ● 6 bath/shower rooms
- Award-winning pavilion ● Heated swimming pool ● Extensive garaging with a studio/games room above
- Beautifully manicured gardens and grounds ● EPC rating D

Guide price: £2,500,000

CL59189

Ipswich 01473 218 218

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## Surrey

### Superb country house on the edge of a highly sought after village

Frensham. Farnham 5 miles, Guildford 15 miles, central London 45 miles

A beautifully presented Grade II listed house with stunning gardens and with frontage on to the River Wey. 3 reception rooms, 8 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, 2 bedroom cottage, garaging, outbuildings, stabling, formal and informal gardens, tennis court, swimming pool, paddocks. About 19 acres.

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# *Bordering National Trust* **PARKLAND**

BLICKLING, NORFOLK

North Norfolk Coast: 8 miles, Holt: 10 miles, Norwich: 12 miles

Superb former rectory, 5 reception rooms, 7 bedrooms,  
5 bathrooms, stables, heated swimming pool, gardens  
designed by Verity Hanson-Smith || about 1.3 acres plus  
0.40 acres leased from The National Trust || EPC = E

Guide £1.65 million

Louis de Soissons  
Savills Norwich  
**01603 920072**  
ldesoissons@savills.com



**savills.co.uk**





# *Privately* SITUATED

NR TUNBRIDGE WELLS, EAST SUSSEX

East Grinstead Station: 4.6 miles,  
Gatwick Airport: 15.5 miles, Central London: 45 miles

Character house with ancillary accommodation,  
747 sq m (8,038 sq ft), 4 reception rooms, 5 double  
bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, guest flat, cottage, tennis court,  
swimming pool, fields, woodland and equestrian complex,  
glorious grounds and southerly views

about 37 acres EPC = D

**Guide £3.75 million**

Will Peppitt  
Savills London Country Department  
**020 3417 8371**  
wpeppitt@savills.com

Amanda Wyatt  
Savills Tunbridge Wells  
**01892 457178**  
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## Buckinghamshire, Stoke Hammond



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Guide Price £3,250,000



**A beautifully restored mill house in a convenient rural setting.**

Leighton Buzzard station 4 miles (Euston from 35 mins) | Milton Keynes 7 miles | London 44 miles

**About 71.7 acres**

Hall | 4 Reception rooms | Kitchen/breakfast room | Study  
Master bedroom suite | 4 Further bedrooms (2 ensuite)  
Shower room | Indoor swimming pool | Tennis court  
1 Bedroom cottage | Garages | Farm buildings | Gardens  
and grounds | Pasture | EPC rating F

**Available as a whole or in 2 lots**



**Mark Rimell**  
Country Department  
**020 7629 7282**



**Kellie Neighbour**  
Country Department  
**020 7629 7282**



**Simon Wilkinson**  
JSA: The Wilkinson Partnership  
**01525 382 065**





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# A HARMONIOUS BLEND OF TUDOR AND GEORGIAN CHARMS

**TUNSTALL, KENT £1,395,000 FREEHOLD**

The Den is a home with a lot to say for itself; the charismatic charms and exposed timbers of a 16th century Tudor home stand side-by-side with the grandeur and distinctly different ornate style of the much later Georgian frontage. With an extremely spacious interior of over 4,100 sq ft, and the addition of 2,300 sq ft of outbuildings, this home has beautiful gardens and grounds in a village location just a short distance away from great transport links, with rail connections to London taking circa 1 hour.

Five bedrooms | living room | family room | dining room | wine cellar | music room | open plan kitchen/diner | one bedroom annex | large studio / gym | buttery for conversion | garaging & outbuildings | Grade II Listed | one acre of gardens and grounds

**01227 456645** | Dominic Coutts  
[dcoutts@winkworth.co.uk](mailto:dcoutts@winkworth.co.uk)

**020 7871 0589** | David King  
[dking@winkworth.com](mailto:dking@winkworth.com)

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E: [londoncountry@carterjonas.co.uk](mailto:londoncountry@carterjonas.co.uk)

# **Carter Jonas**





## ESSEX/SUFFOLK BORDERS

### White Colne

- Marks Tey & A12 6½ miles
- Colchester 8 miles
- London Liverpool Street 48 minutes

**An elegant Regency fronted family house in a glorious rural location ideally placed for daily commuting and good schooling.**

3 reception rooms • 6 bedrooms, 2 en suite  
Further bathroom • Aga kitchen/breakfast room • 9 box stableyard • Manege & horsewalker • Traditional barn & home office  
Swimming pool • Approximately 12.3 acres  
EPC rating E

**Guide price £1,900,000**

### Suffolk

01787 882881  
caroline.edwards@carterjonas.co.uk

### London Country Department

020 7493 0676  
londoncountry@carterjonas.co.uk









## Shropshire

### Beautifully renovated house set in parkland

A lovely Grade II Regency hall in a wonderful setting with 5 cottages and extensive outbuildings. 7 reception rooms, 8 bedroom suites, 3 further bedrooms, 2 further bathrooms. Stunning gardens with walled garden, swimming pool, tennis court and cricket pitch. Stables and barn with planning permission to develop. 5 cottages. Shooting over 711 acres (509 acres of sporting rights). About 201.89 acres.

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[clive.hopkins@knightfrank.com](mailto:clive.hopkins@knightfrank.com)  
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## Buckinghamshire

### Historic riverside idyll

Marlow 4 miles, Henley-on-Thames 5 miles, central London 36 miles

A spectacular Grade II\* listed riverside house steeped in history. Beautifully refurbished in recent years, the house enjoys an enviable position with 1.5 miles of River Thames frontage. 6 reception rooms, home cinema, 9 bedrooms, 9 bathrooms. Staff offices. Housekeeper's cottage. Set in mature gardens and water meadows. Private dock, swimming pool. About 42 acres.

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## West Sussex

### An idyllic rural setting

Horsham 10 miles, Lewes 20 miles, Guildford 25 miles, central London 47 miles

A beautifully restored Georgian farmhouse with numerous outbuildings.

4 reception rooms, 6 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, cellar. Striking 2 bedroom barn, 1 bedroom annexe, farm buildings, garaging, beautifully landscaped gardens, pond, paddocks. About 25 acres.

**Guide price: £2,950,000**

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## Kent

### An imposing country residence

Sevenoaks 2 miles, Knockholt Station 4 miles (London Bridge from 25 minutes)  
Tunbridge Wells 12 miles, central London 30 miles

A magnificent country house in a parkland setting with stunning views towards London. 6 reception rooms, 9 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms. Annexe flat. Indoor swimming pool, tennis court, garaging, store rooms. About 6.5 acres.

**Guide price: £4,000,000**

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## Kent

**A stunning Grade II\* listed Regency house by Decimus Burton**

Tunbridge Wells 0.4 mile,  
London 47 miles

Situated within the much favoured Calverley Park, considered to be one of the prime addresses in Tunbridge Wells. 5 reception rooms, 5 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms. Detached garage with car stacking system. Delightful secluded gardens to both front and rear.

**Guide price: £2,850,000**

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## Alderney, Guernsey

**One of Alderney's finest**

Guernsey 15 minutes, Jersey 20 minutes, Southampton 40 minutes (approximate flight times), France 8 miles

One of Alderney's most prestigious family homes set within large private gardens commanding fine sea views beyond. 6 reception rooms, 7 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, formal gardens and grounds, sea views. Significant tax advantages for residents. About 1.75 acres.

**Guide price: £1,650,000**

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## Kent

### Picture perfect

Tonbridge 6.5 miles, Sevenoaks 8 miles, central London 32 miles

An immaculately presented Grade II listed Regency style house with landscaped gardens and stunning southerly views. 5 reception rooms, 5 bedroom suites, cellars. Coach house with cinema, garage, and stores. Carriage driveway, tennis court. About 1.33 acres.

**Guide price: £2,650,000**

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# Kensington

## Charming family home in prime Kensington

0.4 mile to High Street Kensington Underground Station

A beautiful and wonderfully presented house with a pretty west facing garden, a terrace and has the added benefit of a garage. 4 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, drawing room, sitting room, kitchen/breakfast room, dining room, study, utility room, guest cloakroom, garage, garden. EPC rating D. Approximately 217 sq m (2,350 sq ft).

**Guide price: £4,750,000**

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## Hyde Park

### Exceptional penthouse apartment with outstanding views

Marble Arch Underground Station 0.1 mile

A magnificent interior-designed penthouse of grand proportions situated in a prestigious Grade II listed building overlooking Hyde Park. 5 bedrooms, 5 en suite bathrooms, reception room, dining room, media room, study, kitchen, utility room, staff area, roof terrace, direct lift access. Approximately 500 sq m (5,386 sq ft).

**Guide price: £20,000,000**

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### INSIDE THIS HOME

Stunning Architecturally Designed Detached Family Home; 7 Bedrooms (2 Dressing Rooms); 5 Bathrooms; 3 Reception Rooms; Spacious Accommodation across 3 Floors; Flexible Accommodation on the Second Floor; Accommodation Approximately 6436 sq ft; Picturesque Full Width Balcony; Large Secluded Garden; Double Garage; Parking for Several Vehicles; EPC Rating C.

## A GRAND DESIGN

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### INSIDE THIS HOME

Grade II Listed Folly with later Extensions; 6 Bedrooms, 5 with En-Suite Facilities; Cinema Room; High Spec Open Plan Kitchen Diner & Sitting Room; Amazing Views; Featured on Channel 4's Grand Designs; Set in Approximately 23 Acres (Subject to Measured Survey) of Ancient Woodlands; Private Gated Off Road Parking; Stables; Ménage; Paddocks; Large Indoor Pool with Pool House.



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## HARBOUR ISLAND, BAHAMAS

Lily Pad. 4,222 sf, 4 BR, 4 bath home at The Dunmore Beach Resort. Fully furnished and decorated by renowned designer Amanda Lindroth. Resort amenities, concierge. No income, inheritance or capital gains taxes in the Bahamas. WEB: 22157. \$5,900,000 US. Nick.Damianos@SothebysRealty.com  
**Damianos Sotheby's International Realty**  
 +1 242.376.1841 | SIRbahamas.com



## PARADISE ISLAND, BAHAMAS

Reef at Atlantis. Inspiring Atlantic Ocean views from this 18th floor condominium on the ocean/resort side. 1,100 sf 1 BR, 2 full baths. Resort amenities, rental pool. Pay no property taxes. Life is less taxing offshore. WEB: 21842. \$1,200,000 US. Nick.Damianos@SothebysRealty.com  
**Damianos Sotheby's International Realty**  
 +1 242.376.1841 | SIRbahamas.com



## SONOMA, CA

Approximately 140 acre ranch. Approximately 11,800 sf home with 6 BR, lake, beach, softball diamond, tennis court, gardens, pool and Manager's building, 15 minutes to Sonoma Plaza. 60 minutes to San Francisco. Price upon request. Donald Van de Mark.  
**Sotheby's International Realty Wine Country Brokerage**  
 +1 707.337.2227 | SonomaRanchEstate.com



## LAKEWOOD RANCH, FL

Exquisite custom residence in coveted Highfield, behind the gates of Lakewood Ranch Country Club. This home is impeccably designed for the discerning owner boasting architectural detailing and in a private cul-de-sac preserve location. \$2,750,000. Linda Apple. linda.apple@sothebysrealty.com  
**Premier Sotheby's International Realty**  
 +1 941.586.0553 | premiersothebysrealty.com/FP2Y4W



## EAST HAMPTON, NY

On a private lane in the coveted estate section, this charming country home offers immediate ocean access. Situated on 1± acre with heated gunite pool, pool house and mature landscaping. WEB: 0037319. \$7,500,000. Angela Boyer-Stump. angela.boyer@sothebyshomes.com  
**Sotheby's International Realty Bridgehampton Brokerage**  
 +1 631.613.7345 | sothebyshomes.com/hamptons



## NEW YORK, NY

Rosario Candela's triplex Penthouse at 775 Park Avenue is comprised of 14 rooms with a private, interior elevator that accesses all three floors; eight wood burning fireplaces, 6 BR and 7.5 baths. \$40,000,000. Mary Kent. Mary.Kent@sothebyshomes.com  
**Sotheby's International Realty Eastside Manhattan Brokerage**  
 +1 212.606.7705 | sothebyshomes.com/nyc



## NORTH HAVEN, NY

Immaculate 4 BR, 4 bath custom home designed to take full advantage of the water views. On 1.3± acres, the property has a heated gunite pool with slate patio and expansive hedged grounds leading down to the water's edge. WEB: 0037302. \$3,995,000. Dana Trotter. dana.trotter@sothebyshomes.com  
**Sotheby's International Realty Bridgehampton Brokerage**  
 +1 631.613.7346 | sothebyshomes.com/hamptons



## WATER MILL, NY

European Villa on 2.7± acres with 6 BR, 6 baths. Picturesque setting, mature trees and gardens; Pool, pool house and guest house. Top quality construction and attention to detail throughout. WEB: 0056473. \$15,000,000. Patricia Pettillo. pat.petrillo@sothebyshomes.com  
**Sotheby's International Realty Southampton Brokerage**  
 +1 631.227.4916 | sothebyshomes.com/hamptons



## CHARLESTON, SC

This European style estate with lake views and captivating classical design offers incredible custom amenities. Gothic features are tastefully combined with modern technology including a media room, outdoor kitchen, and smart home capabilities. Price upon request. Dan Ravenel.  
**Daniel Ravenel Sotheby's International Realty**  
 +1 843.723.7150 | DanielRavenelSIR.com





New York, New York | Property ID: JDJNXS

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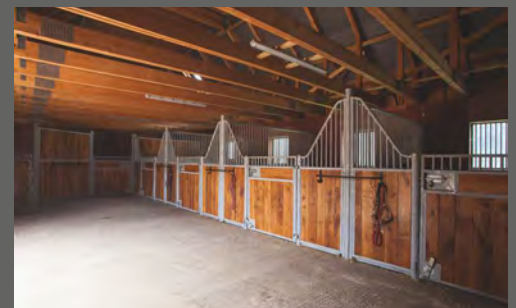
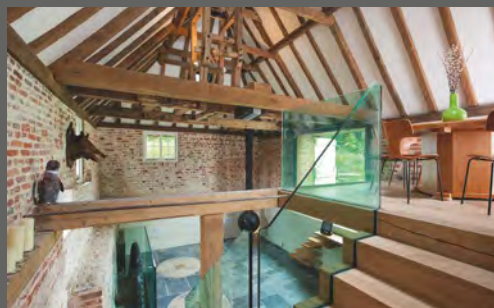
## Kent, Stowting



“Juxtaposed to perfection.”



Guide Price £3,750,000



**An outstanding Georgian Mill House with stunning 21st century additions.**

M20 4 miles | Ashford International Station  
12 miles (St Pancras 37 mins) | Canterbury  
12 miles

**About 24 acres**

5 Reception rooms | Open-plan kitchen/living room | Mill room | Master bedroom suite  
4 Further bedrooms | 3 Further bathrooms  
Studio flat | Swimming pool | Tennis court | Stable block | Manège | Outbuildings | Triple garage  
Mill pond | Gardens and pasture | EPC rating E



**Mark Rimell**  
Country Department  
**020 7629 7282**



**Simon Backhouse**  
Canterbury Office  
**01227 451 123**

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## Somerset Near Taunton

A particularly handsome period house, Listed Grade II, in a highly sought after village.

- 3 reception rooms • 5 bedrooms • 4 bath/shower rooms • 1 bedroom annexe • Conservatory
- Car port • Summerhouse • Croquet lawn • In all about 1.078 acres

Guide price: £900,000

CL59562

Taunton 01823 325 144

taunton@jackson-stops.co.uk



## Devon/Somerset border

A beautifully presented period house in a conveniently situated hamlet.

- 2 reception rooms • Study • Conservatory • 6 bedrooms • 3 bath/shower rooms • Outbuildings
- Double garage • Tennis court • Swimming pool • Paddock • In all about 6.84 acres • EPC rating F

Guide price: £1,350,000

CL59656

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## Somerset Near Taunton

An historic country house, Listed Grade II\*, set within lovely grounds in a convenient country setting.

- 3 reception rooms • Study • Kitchen/breakfast room • 7 bedrooms • 'Justice hall' • 3 bathrooms
- Double garage • Swimming pool • Tennis court • Paddock • In all about 6.18 acres

Guide price: £1,500,000

CL59727

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## PRESTIGIOUS DETACHED VILLA

### Glenbuckie House, Comrie, Perthshire, PH6 2DX SCOTLAND



**GROUND FLOOR ACCOMMODATION:**  
 Entrance Hall, Interior Hall, Lounge, Dining Room,  
 Reception Room, Kitchen, Utility Rooms,  
 Snug Rooms & Cloakroom/WC

**FIRST FLOOR ACCOMMODATION:**  
 Four Bedrooms, 3 en bathrooms & one en shower room

**TOP FLOOR:**  
 1 Bedroom, 1 Bathroom, 2 Attic Rooms, Store.

**OUTSIDE:**  
 Laundry Room, Walled garden  
 overlooking the River Lednock, Garage, Greenhouse & Shed

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# RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955



VITEBSK, RUSSIA 1887 – MARC CHAGALL – 1985 SAINT-PAUL-DE-VENCE, FRANCE

## *Vase de fleurs dans la fenêtre*

Signed lower right: *Chagall*

Gouache and pastel on paper laid down on board: 24  $\frac{3}{16}$  x 19  $\frac{7}{16}$  in / 61.5 x 49.4 cm

Painted in 1935–36

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FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955



LEYTON 1905 – CECIL KENNEDY – 1997 ST ALBANS

## *Spring*

Signed lower right: *Cecil Kennedy*

Oil on canvas: 20 × 16 in / 50.8 × 40.6 cm

Painted in the 1970s

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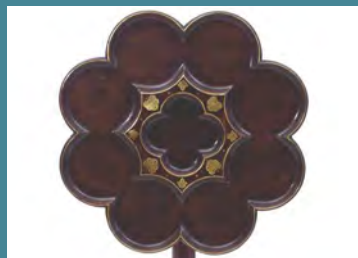
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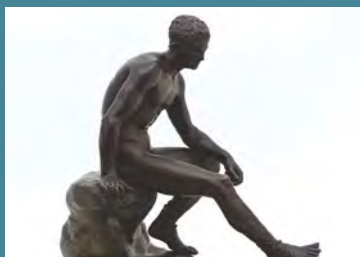
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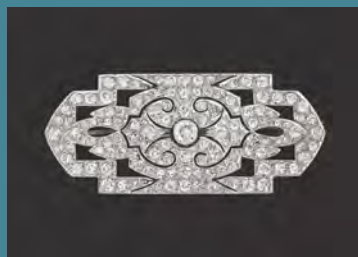
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went, were at home with the world. Recent access to archival materials, including Jane's letters in the Smithsonian, bring to life the artists, writers and performers they knew, and the catalogue includes excerpts from letters by Sargent, Henry James, Eliza Wedgwood and Jane's sisters Rosina Emmet Sherwood and Lydia Field Emmet.

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# COUNTRY LIFE®

VOL CCIX NO 12, MARCH 18, 2015



## *Miss Emily Ponsonby*

Emily, 24, is the eldest child of Mr and Mrs Rupert Ponsonby of Sarsden Glebe, Oxfordshire.  
Educated at City and Guilds of London Art School and Leith School of Art, Edinburgh,  
Emily is a portraitist who works in beeswax, oil and watercolour.

*Photographed at her studio in London SW8 by Chris Allerton in the style of one of her paintings*





Magnolia blossom in a Devon garden  
photographed by Clive Nichols



## Magnolias

'Part of their enchantment lay in the magic of a seemingly lifeless tree's bursting into blooms of such purity'

Follow in the footsteps of emperors, page 78

## Tea

'How can you call yourself a true tea lover if you destroy the flavour...?'

Purists disdain adding sugar, page 92



## Magpies

'The pie so aggravated Noah that he banished it to the roof of his Ark, from which it chattered as the world drowned'

A most mischievous bird, page 90



Nico de Boinville celebrates winning Friday's Betfred Cheltenham Gold Cup on Coneygree

Nick Potts/PA Wire/Press Association Images; Anna Yu/Getty Images; Tony Robins/Getty Images; Ernie Jones/naturepl.com

## This week

\* HDG6FDUHVIDRXUMSDQMQ

The cartoonist on a Goya that 'sums up the stupidity of Man'

3DUNK&KXUFK7UHDXUHV

John Goodall at Holy Trinity, Long Melford, Suffolk

7KHUWVRI VSUQI

Ursula Cholmeley looks forward to the coming weeks at Easton Walled Garden in Lincolnshire

&RZQQJ JQUHV

Steven Desmond explores the scents and sensibilities of fritillaries and Jacky Hobbs meets a collector

8QCHUMHU UFDWOWURRI

Mark Griffiths identifies a revival in the grand conservatory and suggest the best plants with which to furnish them

Cover story 61QHQZ DOKDQIQ VFRP HWRQIH

Mark Griffiths finds much to recommend among the ravishing newer magnolias

\$ KRXHEH RQGVHSDI

Gavin Stamp considers Chinthurst Hill in Surrey, one of Lutyens's most important early commissions

Cover story 2QHURVRURZ WRIRUNA

David Profumo investigates the magpie, that dandy thief

Cover story (YHQP RUHWD 9IEDU

Victoria Marston considers what makes the perfect cuppa

+RVQHZ SRWRHV

Angela Clutton digs up the tastiest regional varieties

3IEHVR (DWW

\$ZUHNXSQVH6WQG

Ptolemy Dean is afraid the thoroughfare will be destroyed

:RQWRXEX PHDO HIFGHV%HQ"

Simon de Burton wishes he owned the company's new 4x4

(YH) ODIKHSV

Ellie Hughes profiles The Prince's Countryside Fund

9IXDOWDUXH DRP P RQWEG

\$SDWRQIRU\* RWE

Peter Lindfield considers a remarkable pedigree

## Every week

7RZQ &RXQ

Should the lynx be reintroduced?

1RWERRN

/HMMV

\$JURP HQV

0\ :HN

Wendy Holden searches for books

,Q7KH\* DCHQ

Troy Scott Smith tackles the big spring clear-up

.IMKHQ\* DCHQ&RRN

3URSHW0 DUNW

Penny Churchill discovers that all is rosy in the Garden of England

3URSHW1 HZV

Has the 'mansion tax' been thought through, asks Arabella Youens

3HIRUP IQ \$UW

Michael Billington senses a Shaw revival in the making

%RRNV

Women gardeners in the spotlight

( [ KIELVRQ

Helena Attlee on Russell Page, the first modern garden designer

\$UW0 DUNW

Huon Mallalieu surveys the riches of this month's Salon du Dessin

%UGI HDQG&URVZ RUG

&OWLAHG\$ GYHMP HQW

6SHFWRU

Lucy Baring blasts into space

7RWUQI E \*HQW





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# Spring has sprung: no time must be lost

**I**T was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade.' We all know such days and, so far, everywhere but in Ambridge—where tempests and floods have sent the cast to elevated refuge at Grey Gables—spring has begun as it should, and as Dickens observed.

Sticky buds of horse chestnut, suspended all through the winter in their honey-glazed dormancy are primed to burst open and unleash their pleated greenery within. Primroses are covering shady banks of churchyard and wayside with their buttery blooms, welcoming the roaming queen bumblebees awakened from their winter sleep. The first lambs bleat, but is there anywhere better to be in spring than in a garden?

The full saturation of green in all its hues unfolds over the next few weeks, in many places accompanied by the majestic unfurling of magnolia flowers (*page 78*). Such capricious spring blooms are all the more to be savoured when combined

with the knowledge that a night of frost at the wrong moment will snuff out their beauty for another year; no other season wears its transience so potently.

The sheer delicacy of spring's blossoms seems to underline their rapid passing and, by implication, the brevity of life itself. When Housman counted how many more springs might reasonably be seen by the 20-year-old Shropshire Lad, a mere 50 remained of his potential three-score and 10: 'Fifty springs are little room.'

No time should be lost, therefore, to get to the woods to enjoy the brief blossoms of the wild cherry trees. In Japan, admiration of cherry blossom is allied to an intense feeling of its ephemerality, symbolising not just the passing of blossoms—like billowing clouds—but life itself.

Yet spring is also the season of anticipations. The soil is hoed and seeds are put in; expectation is everything. This year's sowings will be better than any that went before. The potatoes put in the ground now will be dug up soon enough, to be

savoured with a freshly caught trout. As a season for scent, none can rival it except perhaps winter, whose spare flowers so often push out heady fragrances to catch the attention of the few pollinating insects at large in the bitterest months.

Now, when the blackbird leads the dawn chorus before the sun's first rays peep over the horizon, his optimistic reveille calls forth all avian life, from weighty wood pigeon to diminutive wren: all join in, each claiming his perch. Spring gives optimism to us all.

Still, if one thing is likely to cast a cloud over the gardener's optimistic exertions this spring, it is reports of a slug epidemic, particularly the voracious Spanish gastropods, up to 6in long. Having settled here in recent years, they've increased their numbers exponentially, especially through the mild winter.

The beer trap is still regarded as the most potent lure by many gardeners, but which beverage is best: pale, bitter, mild or brown? Or even, in this case, Cerveza San Miguel? More research is required.

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# Return of the big cats?



**B**EAVERS being back in a British river was the big story earlier this year. Now, Natural England is bracing itself for another reintroduction request, this time for the enigmatic lynx, which was hunted to extinction in the UK 1,300 years ago. The Lynx UK Trust wants to release 18 electronically tagged Eurasian lynx into unfenced areas of Thetford Forest in Norfolk, the Ennerdale valley in the Lake District and in Grumack Forest in Aberdeenshire. The trust is also looking for a suitable site in Wales.

There are some 8,000 lynx in fragmented populations in Europe. The exotic feline with tufted ears and dazzling eyes is shy but predatory; its main quarry is deer, but it will catch other game. They could help with Britain's burgeoning deer problem and their exotic appearance has potential as a tourist attraction, although the likelihood of spotting one is remote. The lynx hunts at dawn and dusk and is sometimes known as the 'ghost cat'.

'If I wanted to go into the tourist trade, I would have done so already,'

**The missing lynx: even once they're introduced, it's unlikely you'll catch even a glimpse of the 'ghost cat'—but how will livestock fare?**

says Andrew Foulds, who farms 2,000 ewes on edge of Thetford Forest. 'I believe this reintroduction would be a step too far. If they let three pairs out, then soon we're going to have a lot more and there is going to be all sorts of trouble.'

Phil Stocker, chief executive of the National Sheep Association, has written to Natural England after being contacted by anxious members. 'Although there is an assumption that lynx will only prey on deer and other wild animals, farmers are concerned,' says Mr Stocker. 'They could easily go after lambs and adult sheep.'

Paul O'Donoghue, scientific advisor to the Lynx UK Trust, retorts that the notion of lynx killing sheep is ridiculous. 'Lynx are a forest specialist; you won't see one walking across a field. In Europe, where reintroductions are routine, they cause no such problems. Anyway, our plan is only to release them in areas where there is an abundance of deer.'

Mr Stocker contends that reintroductions can be 'a bit like letting a genie out of a bottle'. He points out: 'Look at the reintroduction of sea

eagles in Scotland. They're now taking huge numbers of lambs, there's no control programme and no one can do anything about it.' However, Dr O'Donoghue believes numbers will be controlled naturally because lynx are slow breeders. 'Our trial will also involve tagging the offspring of those lynx we release. Our aim is to establish a self-sustaining population in the hundreds 10 or 20 years down the line.' The trust has earmarked lynx sources in Germany and Romania and the plan is to feed the cats for five weeks in specially built pens in the forests prior to release.

**‘The lynx is the best tool to address the deer problem ,**

Lindsay Waddell, chairman of the National Gamekeepers' Organisation, comments: 'It might not be the quantity of game killed, but the level of disturbance the cats cause to game. Shoots might close and rural jobs could be lost. Would the Lynx UK Trust pay compensation then?'

The NFU and NFU Scotland have also expressed concern. The NFU's Andrew Clark says: 'We would be concerned due to the cost involved and high risk of failure. With limited funding available, budgets are better focused on retaining and developing existing biodiversity.'

Ron Macdonald of Scottish Natural Heritage says the process will be complicated. 'Any application [for a licence] would need to take into account the Scottish Code for Conservation Translocations, which is based on international guidelines. These cover many issues, including habitat availability, the impact on existing wildlife and people's livelihoods, animal health and welfare and public opinion.'

However, Dr O'Donoghue is confident of obtaining the green light. 'Under the EU Habitat Directive, the UK has a legal obligation to carry out a trial to assess the feasibility of a lynx reintroduction. I believe that the British countryside is broken, with an overpopulation of deer and ecosystems out of balance. The lynx is the best tool to address this problem.'

*Julie Harding*

*John Gooday, NIS/Minden Pictures/FLPA; Barbara Cook/Demotix/Corbis; Victoria Morton; Dreamstime*



# Politicians urged to remember tourism

THE director of the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA) is calling for political parties to include tourism in their election manifestos after 2014 figures show its increasing importance to the economy. Tourism is the UK's fifth biggest industry and third biggest employer and generates £127 billion a year. Glasgow did well out of the 2014 Commonwealth Games, with increased visitor numbers at several museums and the Scottish National Gallery in Edinburgh had a bumper year with footfall up 39%, thanks in part to its exhibition 'GENERATION'. The Library of Birmingham, which only opened in 2013, was the most visited free attraction outside London with 2.4 million visitors.

The centenary of the First World War had a major impact: the National Trust's Dunham Massey in Cheshire had a rise in visits of 50.9%, the Imperial War Museum's new gallery had almost a million visitors in six months and about five million people were drawn to the ceramic poppies



**The Scottish National Gallery's 'GENERATION' show brought more visitors to Edinburgh to see works such as *Dirty Burning* by Victoria Morton**

at the Tower of London. The British Museum topped the bill for the eighth successive year with 6.6 million visitors, ahead of the National Gallery and the Southbank Centre. Blockbuster exhibitions helped to boost numbers all round.

'No party mentioned tourism in their last manifestos,' points out Bernard Donoghue of ALVA. 'However, these figures clearly demonstrate the popularity of our best-loved attractions and the importance of tourism to the UK. I look forward to seeing all parties spell out their ambitions for tourism, heritage, Arts and culture.'

## All roads lead to Ascot

THE week after the Cheltenham Festival always feels a bit flat for racing enthusiasts, but they now have the inaugural The Prince's Countryside Fund Raceday to look forward to on March 29 at Ascot Racecourse in Berkshire. The seven-race card includes the Coult's Juvenile Handicap Hurdle and The Waitrose Novices' Handicap Steeplechase, both valuable Grade 2 contests with prize funds of £40,000. There's also a packed schedule of arena attractions, including sheep racing, duck herding and welly throwing to keep all the family amused. Gates open at 10.45am, with the first race scheduled for 2pm.

Proceeds from the day will go towards The Prince's Countryside Fund, which awards grants



**Fun for all the family: sheepdog herding ducks**

to projects such as improving service provision in remote areas, supporting rural enterprise, helping farmers and providing training opportunities for young people (*'Every little bit helps'*, page 104). COUNTRY LIFE is proud to be media sponsor of the day.

Tickets start at £17 and there is free entry for under 18s. Fine dining is available from £85 per person. To buy advance tickets, telephone 0844 346 3000 or visit [www.ascot.co.uk](http://www.ascot.co.uk)

## Good week for

### Scottish tea

Incredibly, smoked white tea from the Wee Tea Company at Dalreoch estate, Perthshire, has won the Gold Award at the Salon du Thé in Paris, beating eastern counterparts

### Beavers

The beaver family residing on the River Otter in Devon has passed Defra's health test for tapeworm and will be allowed to stay

### Potential pier owners

The majestic 2,280ft-long pier at Llandudno, North Wales, considered the 'queen' of Welsh piers and a Grade II-listed structure, is for sale for £4.5 million

## Bad week for

### Cold suppers

A fracas over an innocuous cold platter has resulted in Jeremy Clarkson's suspension from presenting duties, threatening the future of BBC's *Top Gear*

### Scotch whisky

The UK market for the golden laughing water decreased by nearly 5% last year; the Scotch Whisky Association is hoping for a tax cut in today's Budget

## Cooking up a storm at Le Manoir

TOP chef Raymond Blanc is celebrating 30 years of his two-Michelin-star Belmond Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons restaurant in Oxfordshire by hosting a series of dinners cooked by his former pupils. He will prepare the introductory course at each Dîner des Protégés event before leaving it to his former employees, including, tonight, Michael Caines, plus Ollie Dabbous (on April 15), Martin Burge (May 27), Paul Heathcote (June 24), Adam Simmonds (July 15), Eric Chavot (September 16), Bruno Loubet (October 21) and Alan Murchison (November 25). Priced at £225 per person, the signature dinners include a Champagne reception. To book, telephone 01844 277484 or visit [www.belmond.com/lemanoir](http://www.belmond.com/lemanoir) ➤







## Inverness: king of the castles

**T**HE North Tower of Inverness Castle—where Duncan was murdered in *Macbeth*—will undergo a major revamp next summer. The Highland Council, which owns the North Tower with the Scottish government, set up a working party last year to investigate the castle's tourist potential, as it's currently closed to the public. The planning application involves opening the lookout facility, giving visitors panoramic views over Inverness and the hills around Loch Ness. Additional plans include a shopping area, historical displays and a 360° live webcam viewing area so that disabled visitors can enjoy what have been described as 'the best views in Scotland' from a lower floor.

The total cost of the project is estimated at £360,000. 'I believe this will enhance Inverness and will attract hundreds of thousands of extra tourists per year,' says Highland Council leader Drew Hendry. 'In the longer term, we are working to see if we can open the entire castle to the public, with a consultants' report due out at the end of April.'

There have been a number of castles on this site since the 11th century and they have acted as prison, county hall and sherriff's court. The current configuration was designed by William Burn in 1836. *JH*

**Ultimately, it's hoped to open the whole castle to the public**

## Solved: the 'cork-screw' murders

**T**HE mystery of some 100 grey and harbour seal deaths in Scotland may have been solved. Since 2009, dead seals have been discovered with injuries in a 'corkscrew' formation, thought to be caused by the deep, spiral-shaped gouges



**Could a single grey male seal be the sea-rial killer?**

on ships' propellers. However, a grey seal was recently observed by the Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU) and University of Durham researchers in a breeding colony on the Isle of May leaving similar marks on the five young pups it killed.

'That adult male was tagged and it went on to kill others in the same way,' says Ailsa Hall, director of the SMRU. 'We wondered if it had developed a taste for blubber. Perhaps it realised that it had discovered a rich energy source without the need to find fish.'

The news will be welcomed by the shipping industry, although environmental groups say that previous warnings not to use ducted propellers near seal conservation areas should be reinstated. *JH*

## Shelling out on Porlock oysters

**T**HE Food Standards Agency has awarded oysters from Exmoor's beautiful Porlock Bay its top hygiene rating. Only one other area in England—the Kent mudflats—enjoys the same accolade, which means that the oysters harvested can be sent straight to local restaurants without first needing purification. Roger Hall, a member of Porlock Futures CIC, which will become the first community-owned shellfish company in the UK, believes the sea water is so clean due to the strong tides of the Bristol Channel, 'plus we don't have any polluting freshwater sources'. Porlock Futures, which was formed from the original working party set up by the parish council to investigate the potential of local trades, is planning to sell its first oysters in the summer. 'We have 9,000 ready,' says Mr Hall. 'The hope is that we will provide jobs for up to six people. We can buy seed oysters for 1p and sell them for 50p–60p, so that's a great return. We also hope it will act as a tourist attraction.' The bay in west Somerset boasted a thriving oyster trade in the 19th century, harvesting up to 1,200 per day, but fishermen travelling from the east of the country depleted stocks until they died out. The current venture began last year when the seed oysters were released and the company is now seeking funds of £90,000 to further the business. *JH*



**The Porlock Bay oysters are regularly inspected**





**Four seasons in one day:** Scottish-born painter Oona Campbell's latest collection of 22 impressionistic and textured works is inspired by the River Stour as it flows through Wiltshire and Dorset. The exhibition at Panter and Hall, 11–12, Pall Mall, London SW1 (020–7399 9999; [www.panterandhall.com](http://www.panterandhall.com)) runs until April 3.

## Internet project has lepidopterists in a flutter

RESEARCHERS from the Oxford University Museum of Natural History have begun an internet search to identify hundreds of butterfly and moth species contained in a vast collection of 220-year-old plates.

Amateur entomologist William Jones compiled *Icones*, six volumes of illustrations and descriptions of 760 butterfly and moth species from around the world, in the late 18th century. His illustrations are from drawings he made of private collections in the London area, many of which have since disappeared or been destroyed.

Thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund, the museum has been able to digitise the plates, which were given to them by Jones's descendant Frederick Dawtrey Drewitt in the 1920s. The illustrations are now online and the museum is asking experts from around the world for help. 'We have identified two species that are extinct and we may go on to find more that no longer exist, as well as some that have never even been described,' says head of archives Kate Santry.

The museum team believes that about 200 of the plates were cor-



**Two of Jones's illustrations from his book *Icones* of about 1795: only some 200 species have been identified so far**

rectly identified in the late 1700s, by Danish zoologist Johann Christian Fabricius. He viewed Jones's paintings and gave scientific names to some species, which he subsequently went on to publish in his foundational entomological text *Entomologica Sytematica*. JH



## Country Mouse

### *Apples and Blackberries*

IF you found yourself reaching for a thick jumper last weekend, you were part of what is known as the blackthorn winter. The snowy blossom of the wild plum bursts out during a cold snap. For me, it signifies the turning of the tide and is written in the mud—suddenly, the ground dries up and bears the print of tractor tyres and deer before cracking into hexagonal shapes. It's caused by the warmer weather, but, more especially, by the flora sucking up the precious water as it bursts into new leaf following months of being dormant.

If only the new edition of the *Oxford Junior Dictionary* had remained dormant. As Robert Macfarlane wrote in *The Guardian*: 'A sharp-eyed reader noticed that there had been a culling of words concerning nature. Under pressure, Oxford University Press revealed a list of the entries it no longer felt to be relevant to a modern-day childhood. The deletions included acorn, adder, ash, beech, bluebell, buttercup, catkin, conker, cowslip, cygnet, dandelion, fern, hazel, heather, heron, ivy, kingfisher, lark, mistletoe, nectar, newt, otter, pasture and willow. The words taking their places in the new edition included attachment, block-graph, blog, broadband, bullet-point, celebrity, chatroom, committee, cut-and-paste, MP3 player and voice-mail... For blackberry, read BlackBerry'. How sad. MH

## Town Mouse

### *Spring cleaning the study*

DO books furnish a room? You could certainly sit on the piles of them in our house. Imagine my delight when I met Michael Gibbs, the nearest thing London has to a Parisian *bouquiniste*, having been forced to abandon his Bolingbroke Bookshop, in these dark days for booksellers, in favour of a stall in the Northcote Road market ([www.bolingbrokebookshop.co.uk](http://www.bolingbrokebookshop.co.uk)). He's launching a 'bespoke libraries' service to help private clients with their bibliophilic needs. This could include assembling complete collections, refreshing a library that hasn't been kept up to date or, as I sincerely hope in our case, sorting one out.

'Shelves,' he said, a few minutes after seeing my study. I need a whole wall of them. The basement could do with one, too. Once they're built, Michael will take down all our books and sort them. I'm still reeling from the idea. No more wobbly towers of reference material around my desk. Empowering, but wouldn't my very personality be threatened? A friend has just had his specialist collection of natural-history books catalogued using software that imports the necessary information from the 13-digit International Standard Book Number used since the 1970s. (Old books must be entered manually.) Total control! Perfect order! I'm feeling faint. CA





# Town & Country Notebook

## Quiz of the week

- 1) Which of these cities was the first to open an underground rail system: London, Paris or New York?
- 2) Which two ingredients are mixed to create a ganache?
- 3) Whose resignation made news headlines around the world in February 2013?
- 4) Which coin ceased to be legal tender in 1980?
- 5) Where is Osborne House?

## 100 years ago in COUNTRY LIFE March 20, 1915



**S**IR—Nimrod, the mother cat, was a mighty hunter. She kept the house and buildings clear of rats and mice and such small deer... on one occasion [she] brought in five rabbits between breakfast and luncheon. She took her risks, too, for once she returned, after four days' absence, with half a rabbit in her mouth, a wire snare tight around her neck and the wooden peg, which she had dug or pulled up, trailing behind her; and yet again, one Sunday morning she appeared on the kitchen doorstep with a steel trap, weighing 2lb 1oz, fixed on her leg, dragging after her, like Marley's ghost, 18in of clanking iron chain. However, as 'in the history of the world the hunter gives place to the farmer,' so it came about that Nimrod passed before advancing civilization in the guise of the farmer's steel trap, leaving behind her an orphaned kitling wean, whose eyes had not yet opened...  
*A. S. Reid, Trinity College, Glenalmond*

**Words of the week**  
**Athazagoraphobia** (Noun)  
Fear of being forgotten  
**Quixotic** (Adjective)  
Unrealistically optimistic  
**Raddled** (Adjective)  
Rundown

1) London 2) Chocolate and cream 3) Pope Benedict XVI 4) The sixpence 5) Isle of Wight

## The nature of things

### Purple toothwort (*Lathraea clandestina*)

**I**T forms crowded pools of amethyst, closely hugging the ground, that, from a distance, might be thought to be an eruption of dwarf spring crocuses, unusually tightly packed. But closer inspection reveals something else entirely and, among the many colourful plants emerging from the ground at this time of year, few are as strange as *Lathraea clandestina*, the purple toothwort that arrived from the Continent in the late 19th century.

Its appearance is only for the period of flowering, from March to May, for it has no need of chlorophyll-manufacturing foliage, the plant gaining its sustenance parasitically, from a number of host trees, especially poplars and willows. Although certain bumblebees are prepared to forage in the strange, cowl-like flowers, the nectar they find is very highly alkaline (and has been compared, for taste, with ammonia), thus, birds and ants won't touch them.

Much of *Lathraea*'s business goes on underground (suckers at the root tips attach themselves to the roots of host plants), but it has another method of survival up its sleeve. Once



seeds develop, they are explosively ejected some considerable distance. And, as the plant is usually associated with trees beside rivers and streams, seeds are often also carried by water to new destinations and hosts. **KBH**

*Illustration by Bill Donohoe*

## Time to buy

**Botanical Recipe  
of Love hand cream, £3,**  
Le Couvent Des Minimes (<http://uk.lecouventdesminimes.com>)

**'A Walk in the Bluebell  
Wood' postcards, £10 for**  
a pack of 12, Vicky Mappin (01273  
486320; [www.vickymappin.co.uk](http://www.vickymappin.co.uk))



### The Old Green Tree, Green Street, Bath

This pocket-sized pub is Bath's oldest hostelry. Its three little separate rooms have

hardly changed since a revamp about 90 years ago, making it a perfect 1920s period piece. Heavy leather seats are built into its squared oak panelling, the floors have oak parquet and the ceilings are low and glossy, making for thoroughly chatty acoustics. Decent bar lunches include tasty roast-beef sandwiches and a few simple hot dishes, with the drinks being the high point: half a dozen interesting craft beers, a farm cider, imported bottled beers, several dozen malt whiskies and a few carefully selected wines by the glass. For anyone allergic to over-fancy gastropubs, piped music and 'please wait to be seated' signs, this is the ideal antidote.

(01225 448259)

*Alisdair Aird is co-editor of 'The Good Pub Guide 2015', out now from Ebury (£15.99)*

### Espresso Blend Coffee,

£6.95 for  
a 250g bag  
(020-7193  
1338; [www.pactcoffee.com](http://www.pactcoffee.com))





## Unmissable events

### Walk

**March 22 Art Miles Jacobean Fundraising Walk**, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London SE21. Stroll through 17th-century actor Edward Alleyn's country estate and raise money for the gallery. Food, falconry and entry to the gallery. Tickets £20 (020-8693 5254; [www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk](http://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk))

### Exhibitions

**March 21-22 Contemporary British art**, Avington Park, Winchester, Hampshire. Pieces include a 5ft-high sculpture of a female torso, featuring anonymous portraits of breasts, which will be auctioned in aid of The Haven, a national breast-cancer charity ([www.avingtonpark.co.uk](http://www.avingtonpark.co.uk); 01962 779260)

**March 24-April 10 'Venice in Peril Exhibition'**, The Osborne Studio Gallery, 2, Motcomb Street, London SW1. Dreamy works by Sophie Walbeoffe, Antony Bream and others (above), in aid of the Venice in Peril



Fund (020-7235 9667; [www.osg.uk.com](http://www.osg.uk.com))

**Until April 19 'Dickens's First Love: The True Love Story of Charles and Maria'**, Charles Dickens Museum, 48, Doughty Street, London WC1. Love poems and writings about Maria Beadnell, the early object of the writer's obsession, who was later immortalised as Dora Spenlow in *David Copperfield* and Flora Finching in *Little Dorrit* (020-7405 2127; [www.dickensmuseum.com](http://www.dickensmuseum.com))

**Point-to-point March 21 Hurworth at Hutton Rudby**, North Yorkshire. Plus Lanarkshire & Renfrewshire and Eglinton at Overton, VWH at Siddington, Gloucester-

shire, and Wilton at Milborne St Andrew, Dorset. For weather reports and form guide, phone the Talking Point hotline on 09068 446061 ([www.pointtopoint.co.uk](http://www.pointtopoint.co.uk))

### Book now

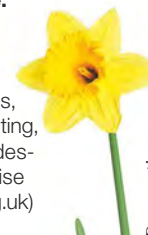
**May 15-18 A Sussex sketchbook**, West Dean College, Chichester, West Sussex. Drawing course with Paul Cox, suitable for beginners. £322 (01243 818300; [www.westdean.org.uk](http://www.westdean.org.uk))

**May 30 The Dream of Gerontius**, Winchester Cathedral, Hampshire. Elgar's haunting oratorio sung by the Royal Choral Society with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Peter Auty as Gerontius. Tickets £12-£29, 7.30pm (01962 857275; [www.winchester-cathedral.org.uk](http://www.winchester-cathedral.org.uk))

## NGS garden of the week

**Fonthill House, Tisbury, Wiltshire. March 22, 2pm-6pm. £6, children free.**

Sunday is a mouth-watering, once-a-year chance to enjoy this outstanding country-house garden. Walk through the woodland garden or among carpets of daffodils, taking in the superb views and historic setting, and admire the formal areas recently redesigned by Tania Compton and Marie-Louise Agius. Dogs welcome, teas ([www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk))



COUNTRY LIFE Picture Library; 'The Little Shrine' by Terence Gilbert/The Osborne Studio Gallery; Dreamstime.com

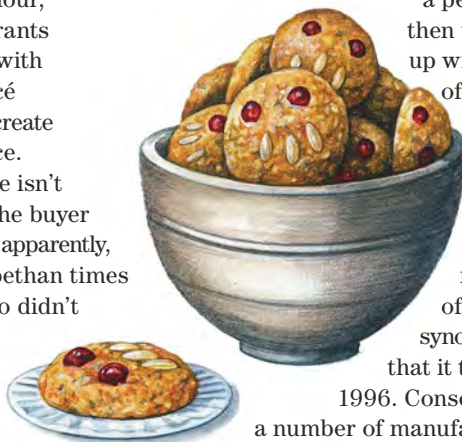
**W**HAT's not to like about a bun that smiles back at you? These plump little Yorkshire treats—a cross between a scone and a rock cake—are made from a combination of flour, butter or lard, juicy currants and citrus peel, topped with strategically placed glacé cherries and almonds to create the cheeky fat rascal face.

The origin of the name isn't as derogatory towards the buyer as it might sound—it can, apparently, be traced back to Elizabethan times when thrifty bakers, who didn't want to waste leftover bits of dough at the end of their shift, added spices and dried fruit to create a jazzy bun.

In the early 1980s, when looking for a Yorkshire specialty that could become

## Buns (and cakes) of Britain

**Fat rascal**



uniquely theirs, chefs from the world famous Bettys bakery in Harrogate discovered a recipe for turf cake, which was historically cooked in a pan over a peat fire by shepherds, then tweaked it to come up with their own version of the fat rascal.

Betty's signature fat rascal buns quickly became so popular—the company now sells more than 375,000 of them a year—and so synonymous with the bakery that it trademarked them in

1996. Consequently, although a number of manufacturers bake similar-looking buns, they go by different names such as chubby rogues, little tykes and fat scamps. *Ellie Hughes*

*Illustrations by Fiona Osbaldstone*

## What to drink this week

### Jura wines

Delicate and fine, the wines from this region between Burgundy and Switzerland could prove addictive, warns **Harry Eyres**



Jura—the green hill and pasture land around Arbois and Lons-le-Saunier, 70 miles north-west of Geneva—is the gem among undiscovered French wine areas. Jura's wines are utterly distinctive, lightish, nervy and fine-boned and go against all modern trends. Once you discover them, you may find, like me, that you become addicted.

### Why you should be drinking them

Jura's grape varieties are unusual and the wine-making methods odder still. The most famous wine, *vin jaune*—made from Jura's native Savagnin grape and aged for six years under a 'veil' of yeast—is much closer to sherry than a modern-style clean, neutral white. Some of the reds are so pale they could almost be rosé. Jura has an especially high proportion of organic, biodynamic and natural producers.

### What to drink

If a *vin jaune* such as the superbly refined, long-flavoured Domaine de Montbourgeois 2007, with its complex, subtle aromas of grasses and dried flowers, and the distinctive *flor* character (£33; [www.thewinesociety.com](http://www.thewinesociety.com)) is too extreme, try Arbois Savagnin 2010 Domaine Daniel Dugois (below, £19.62; [www.lescaves.co.uk](http://www.lescaves.co.uk)). Think a cross between the lightest of manzanilla sherries and Sancerre: almonds and apples on the nose, intense freshness on the palate. For a completely non-oxidative Savagnin, François Rousset-Martin's Cuvée Zéro Zéro (£16.38; [www.lescaves.co.uk](http://www.lescaves.co.uk)) has a complex, musky nose and a flavour as fine, sharp and delicate as an etching. Jura also does reds. Michel Gahier's Arbois Trousseau Les Grands Vergers 2012 (£17.94; [www.lescaves.co.uk](http://www.lescaves.co.uk)) has a raspberry nose and bracing freshness on the palate.







## Letter of the week

### Broad Church?

READING your editorial on February 18 about parish churches, the last paragraph on developing churches as alternatives to village halls struck a chord with me, albeit a disappointing one.



Setting myself up in business as a yoga teacher over recent months and looking for class spaces brought rejection after rejection from churches and church-supported spaces, the general theme being 'it's not Christian'. I know from colleagues that I'm not alone in this.

The extra income to churches and awareness of their presence in the community ought logically to be welcomed by the clergy and parish church councils; clearly, sadly not. Perhaps most sad is the implied judgment on others' beliefs and faith; I combine being a yoga teacher and a Christian happily and I know others do as well.

A visionary Church would see an inclusive mission to the community, regardless of the doctrinal roots of the groups coming in the door, so perhaps the key to protecting our parish churches is for them to realise that there can be more than one route to spirituality and self improvement. Who knows—the rushed souls who find some peace and reflection in a Tuesday-night yoga class may soon be those gracing the pews on a Sunday morning.

Jessica Hart-Garbett, by email

**The writer of the letter of the week will win a bottle of Pol Roger Brut Réserve Champagne**



### Fine words of mice and men

I ALWAYS find amusement in Town Mouse and Country Mouse and am reminded of their origins in Aesop and Horace, the ancient Greek storyteller and the Roman poet.

Aesop and Horace were products of societies in which education and ability—all hard work!—could provide upward mobility and reward, fame and fortune. Aesop was a slave who entertained at the Court of Croesus. His tales of morals and mirth we take for granted as part of our culture, with various well-known phrases attributed to him: 'one man's meat is another man's poison', 'sour grapes' and so on.

Horace, the Roman poet who wrote in Latin, drew his information from the Greek masters and was the son of a freed slave who became the owner of a small country estate.

With education and ability, plus hard work, we can all be upwardly mobile and prosper. But few of us will make a fortune or earn lasting fame.

Ian Forrester, Kirkcaldy



### A reflection on mortality

HOW easy it is to empathise with Rupert Uloth having to put to sleep his cherished terrier (*My Week, February 25*). It is a deeply distressing experience. Thank heavens, however, that we humans have the power to play God and put an end to our dogs' sufferings and are spared recourse to the law to do so; it is a significant mercy when weighed against the inevitable severe burden of grief. Indeed, having been brought up to maintain the stiffest of upper lips, I only learned the benefits of grieving when my first dog died.

As one grows older, the act of putting a dog to sleep never grows any easier;

actually, it becomes harder. Nevertheless,

the immensely cathartic process of being able to grieve without restraint greatly speeds the transition from despair to solace, making it so much easier to see a light at the end of a very dark tunnel.

I dread the day when my wonderful labrador reaches the end of the road, but I dread also the day when age dictates that it would be imprudent to take on another puppy.

Michael Brook, North Yorkshire



### The Arnolfinis' guiding light



I MUCH enjoyed Matthew Dennison's article about the history of chandeliers, accompanied by your photograph of five simply amazing 'sculptural extravaganzas' (*February 18*). But could I add a word to his description of the chandelier in Van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait (*left*)? I agree that the merchant and his wife are portrayed among indications of their comfortable lifestyle and that candles at the time were expensive, but I think that the depiction of a single candle (which in Christian iconology, then as now, represents the presence of God) was to show to the viewer that the Arnolfinis were not only well-to-do, but rooted in their Christian faith.

Lady White, London

### Creatures with class

MY eldest daughter, Jessamy (now at Edinburgh University), was Senior Prefect at Marlborough College in 2013 and had no interest in sporting facial hair or smoking a pipe, but did fancy grazing her goats in Court (*March 4*). Thus, Fudge and Brownie—two obliging pygmy goats—were delivered one afternoon and they had a lovely time nibbling the mown turf (*right*). When they had had enough, they returned to Park Farm, Alderley, Gloucestershire, and the loving stewardship of Nicola Scott-Bowden. It was one of the highlights of a hectic term for Jessamy and provided a very welcome distraction to pupils and beaks going about their business that day.

Susannah Dibben, by email



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(photographs welcome)

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## The exotic origins of marmalade

AS a Portuguese man living in England, I was delighted to see that you wrote in your recent article that the word marmalade comes from the Portuguese *marmelo*, a fact very few people know (February 25).

In fact, the *marmelo* is the quince fruit. *Marmelada* is what you refer to as quince paste and, in Brazil, it is called *goiabada* and was made from *goiaba* (guava) as local substitute. In both Brazil and Portugal, it is customary to eat the paste with cheese. This lends further credence to the theory that marmalade/marmelada came from Portugal.

Incidentally, *marmeleiro*, the *marmelo* tree, has very flexible twig-like branches, which are sold in bunches and used as traditional riding whips in Portugal.

Pascal Monteiro  
de Barros,  
Gloucestershire



## Two sets of rules

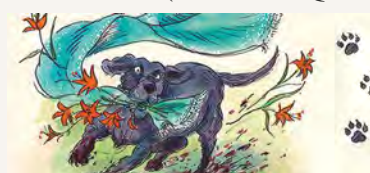
I WAS interested to read the winning letter in the issue of March 4. The Cleaner Royal Borough group in Chelsea and Kensington, of which I was chairman, found that, if one person dropped some litter, it became a magnet for more rubbish.

At one meeting, I told how, watching the dustcart going down Fulham Road collecting rubbish, I saw the driver throw a cigarette packet out of the window.

Peter Johnson

## COUNTRY LIFE MARCH 25

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Claire Plumridge/Alamy; Claire Mackie; National Gallery, London, UK/Bridgeman Images; Zoomar GmbH/Alamy; John Holder



# British food is back on the menu

LAST week came the welcome news of the first successful planting of British truffles. Once common in Britain, they had died out save for a very few local producers, such as Wiltshire Truffles, whose owner says he can't meet the demand. Now, after years of research, Dr Paul Thomas has harvested his first planted truffles from a secret location in Leicestershire. He has a series of other sites already prepared and it looks as if an industry is about to be reborn.

What a change from the Brown Windsor soup, British sherry and Lymeswold cheese that characterised the disaster that once was British food. For nearly a century, the country that had produced Mrs Beeton and Hannah Glasse made a virtue of not being interested in food. As well as the simple honesty of 'chips with everything', we pretended that *ersatz* products of questionable origin were as good as the 'mucked about' food that foreigners, particularly the French, enjoyed.

What should still shock is that this attitude persisted into the 1980s, when Peter Walker, the Minister of Agriculture, launched that much-hyped cheese Lymeswold. The product of the Milk Marketing Board's laboratories, everything about it was second rate. The fictitious name soon brought derision, greedy producers sent very immature cheese to market and it had to be exported as Westminster Blue because foreigners couldn't pronounce Lymeswold! Within a decade, the enterprise collapsed and it looked as if the British dairy industry was doomed forever to be a commodity producer.

In 30 years, that has entirely changed. In 2014, we exported 130,000 tons of cheese out of the 400,000 we produced. Much of it was destined for food manufacture, but an increasing proportion is now high-value local production. It's an amazing turnabout, which Charles de Gaulle would not have thought possible. When he said: 'How can

you govern a country which has 246 varieties of cheese?' he couldn't have imagined that this nation of shopkeepers would be producing more than 700 different varieties and selling them all over the world—with a significant market in France.

But that would not be all that would disconcert the General. In his day, no one on the Continent rated British agriculture. We were seen as an urban nation that had long ago lost its links with the land. Indeed, many of our politicians played into that reputation, condemning the Common Agricultural Policy and scorning the demands of the small farmers of Germany, Ireland, and France. Who would then have thought that this land of industrialised farming would now produce

‘This nation of shopkeepers now produces more than 700 varieties of cheese’

sparkling wines that can beat the great names, such as Pol Roger, Taittinger and Heidsieck? And not just one. Hattingley Valley, Digby, Ridgeview, and Nyetimber from the South Downs and Camel Valley from the West Country: all of them can triumph over stiff French and New World

competition. Rightly unable to call their product Champagne, there is, as The Duchess of Cornwall proposed, a real need for a new word to distinguish these vintages from mere copies. They deserve consideration in their own right.

Yet it's not just cheese and wine. It's the culinary arts as a whole. Everything's changed. Where once a French chef was the mark of quality food, today, British restaurateurs, from Gordon Ramsay to Angela Hartnett, produce dining every bit as fine as that we expect in Paris. Proud of their reliance on local produce, they benefit from the resurgence of production of specialist meat, organic vegetables and homemade preserves. From Lymeswold to world-class sparkling wine and truffles in 30 years—we really do have something to celebrate!



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# The icing on the cake

I'VE written previously in these pages on the wonders of my local town of Chesterfield. Here is another: the Thursday Flea. A weekly second-hand fair held under the striped awnings of the cobbled marketplace, it's a festival of the fabulous and unexpected. Some stalls are carefully set out, but others look as if someone has just emptied out a mouldering suitcase that's been gathering dust in an attic for years.

**‘Laptops, back-up laptops and USB sticks; it's more like a space launch than a wedding boogie’**

When my son's home from school, the Flea is top of his list to visit. There are several stalls selling vintage *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* items and he happily barter and haggles with his favourite dealers. Perhaps, one day, during the endless summer holidays, he might get a stall himself and sell for huge profits some of the vast collection of *Thomas the Tank Engine* trains we amassed during that phase of his career.

My own interest is the book-stalls where, on my last visit, I came across some extraordinary volumes. In the *sic transit gloria mundi* way of these things, the entire library of some recently deceased local notable had made its way to the Flea. I pounced on it as it consisted of the kind of books that will never be published again. My haul included a volume of extremely rude songs from a 17th-century collection called *Pills To Purge Melancholy*.

Ingenious though this title is, it paled beside those of the ballads inside: *The Old Fumbler*,

for one, followed by *The Tying of the Garter* and *Rumpled, Tumbled and Jumbled*. My particular favourite, *Was Ever Maiden So Lericompooped*, had in common with the rest a heavy reliance on *double entendre*. There was also one called *Pretty Kate of Windsor*. All reminded us that sex, in the past, was seen as a far more amusing business than perhaps it is today.

Even so, the past had many downsides and one of the things they did differently was lavatories. We had to face this fact recently during a stay in Northumberland at a holiday cottage with an outside loo. The alfresco nature of the thunder-box had been omitted from the cottage description and the reality of so inconvenient a convenience was a shock. Especially in the early hours, in the teeth of a brisk wind.

On the plus side, the outside loo was heated and actually quite pleasant once reached; it also offered amazing views up and down the coast. Several times, I witnessed a magnificent dawn breaking over Dunstanburgh Castle and people romantically riding horses on the beach. Even so, it was a relief to get back to the throne at home.

Lindisfarne has never really done it for me. Don't get me wrong, I'm as wild about history as the next autodidact, but the sacred island of St Aidan and St Cuthbert hasn't been my sort of place. It's always freezing and irredeemably bleak and, on previous visits, I've even been driven to drown my sorrows in the mead samples at the English Heritage shop.

This last trip there looked set to be worse than usual as neither the admittedly beautiful Lindisfarne Castle (home of COUNTRY LIFE's founder) or the Abbey were open. Instead, we had to walk around the island—and




**And well they might look more blissful than the real thing—confectionary couples don't have to deal with the post-wedding credit-card bill**

legion at this time of year; every country house and hotel is holding these conventions in which the myriad goods and services aimed at the contemporary bride and groom are displayed. It was obvious as soon as I got through the door how hopelessly stiff my own 1993 nuptials would seem to couples today.

The 2015 bridal party turns up in a VW camper van and has its every move recorded by a 'reportage' photographer. The order of service reads like a theatre programme, with a cast list from the bride right down to the ringbearer (who may or may not be a dog). At the reception, instead of a table plan, there's a chilled-out chalkboard saying: 'Sit where you like, don't pick a side/we're all family once the knot is tied.'

The main course might be pie and mash in a cardboard box and pudding a cone from a bespoke ice-cream cart. Tables are strewn with place cards stuck in white chocolates and chairs, swathed in skirts of white gros-grain, threaten to upstage the bride. Afterwards, there's the

disco—laptops, back-up laptops and USB sticks; more like a space launch than a wedding boogie.

All so complicated—and so expensive. Hopefully, by the time my daughter gets married, the wheel of fashion will have turned once more and top tables, martinet snappers and receiving lines will have made a triumphant return. 

Wendy Holden's new novel, *Wild & Free*, a comedy set at a summer festival, will be published on April 23 by Headline

**Next week: Isabella Tree**

what a revelation it was. As the day brightened into something almost summery, Lindisfarne became magical: sun blazing off a sea of silky blue, glittering stones and shells in the shining sands, the cries of interesting-sounding birds and the bracing whiff of salty seaweed. There was even a gastro-pub. My mead days are over.

Research for a book I'm writing took me to my first local 'Wedding Fayre'. They're





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# My favourite painting Gerald Scarfe

## *Duel with Cudgels* by Goya



*Duel with Cudgels*, 1820/23, by Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828), 49¼in by 102¾in, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, Spain



**Gerald Scarfe is a cartoonist, illustrator and designer. His exhibition, 'Milk Snatcher: The Thatcher Drawings' is on show at The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, Co Durham until May 31**

‘Goya is one of my heroes, and this brilliant and shocking black painting captures, symbolises and sums up the stupidity of Man. Two men, like animals, beat one another to a pulp as they sink into the quagmire. Yet another fight over territory? Religious division? Or just naked aggression, one nation against another? It has all the direct simplicity of a cartoon—the message is clear. I’ve used similar images many times myself: in the 1980s, I painted a huge backdrop of two ape-like monsters splintering each others’ skulls for *The Big One*, an anti-nuclear show produced by Susannah York in London. I took my inspiration directly from this painting’

### John McEwen comments on *Duel with Cudgels*

GOYA witnessed the hierarchical order of the 18th century being replaced by the revolutionary disorder of the 19th. When life-threatening illness struck in 1792, he was at the zenith of his professional career. The illness left him stone deaf. War in Spain, the first ‘guerrilla’ war in history, followed and conflicts continued until his death. The chaos freed him to some degree from the servitude of commissions and he reacted to the horror on his own liberal terms. His genius was released. Had he died in 1793, he would be remembered as a significant Spanish painter; his confrontation with war made him an artistic titan.

In 1819, after a second near-fatal illness, he bought a country villa outside Madrid, suitably named the ‘Villa of the Deaf Man’ after its previous occupant. It was a refuge from

the continuing terror overseen by the tyrannical Ferdinand VII (1784–1833), a despicable king to whom he was still Court Painter. Goya enlarged the house and ‘decorated’ the walls with 14 private and cathartic murals. They were subsequently called the ‘Black Paintings’ due to their nightmarish imagery.

This painting was one of four that filled the side walls of the ground-floor room. In the 1828 inventory, it was titled *Two Provincials*. The fighters appear to be sinking in a quagmire. Art historians puzzle over its meaning. Is it an allegory of Spain under Ferdinand, who ruled by sowing discord? Certainly, it is a Dantean vision of Hell.

Baron d’Erlanger, a later owner of the villa, had the murals transferred onto canvas (severely damaging them in the process) and presented them to the state in 1881. 🐉



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## NEIL LAWSON BAKER (born 1938)

Neil Lawson Baker has been producing sculpture for 25 years, much of which has found its way to corporate venues, beginning in 1987 with a work in London for Sterling House at Ransomes Dock near Albert Bridge, London.

He then produced two 7 metre works for British Gas HQ's. Later he designed the front of the National Stadium for The Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur which included a 100 metre water feature and 7 major stone arches almost twice as big as London's Marble Arch and which housed and reflected a 16 metre bronze Kris enlarged in Paris by Haligon and cast in England by the late Burleighfield Foundry.

Other major commissions include sculptures for British Telecom, for the celebration of the Inauguration and Opening of the Channel Tunnel, for the London International Financial Futures Exchange, for the Palace of Westminster offices in Parliament Street and he also made the Magna Carta Memorial Fountain. Some of these sculptures have seen dedications by HM The Queen, President Mitterand, The Prince of Wales, The Master of the Rolls and Members of Parliament. A host of works have also been commissioned and travelled to private collectors both in the UK and across the world.

Another work commissioned by The Icorec Trust was personally presented in the Security Council at the UN in New York by The Duke of Edinburgh. Marcel Marceau also commissioned work in France.



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# Parish church treasures

## Votive verses

Photography by Paul Barker and text by John Goodall



**T**HIS is a detail of the late-15th-century roof over the family chapel at Long Melford built by John Clopton (d.1497), a great benefactor of this wealthy parish. A hand emerges from stylised clouds and grasps the end of a scroll that winds its way around the whole cornice of the interior. It notionally wraps itself around a spiral of intertwined foliage.

On each fold of the scroll are verses in English minutely written in a Gothic script. Across the beams of the ceiling are shorter scrolls with the repeated invocation 'Jesus mercy and gramercy'. There also appear phrases from the litany. Between the beams



**The Church of the Holy Trinity, Long Melford, Suffolk**

is a scattering of moulded stars to suggest the celestial firmament. The cornice verses bear a direct relationship to the areas of the chapel they ornament. Those over the altar, for example, speak of the virtues of the Mass.

They were written by John Lydgate, a monk of Bury St Edmunds, who died in about 1450. He was a popular poet during his lifetime and—as the chapel shows—beyond it, too. Verses by Lydgate were elsewhere used in a similar way. The most celebrated was a translation of French verses commissioned in about 1430 to accompany a painting of the Dance of Death in the cemetery cloister at St Paul's, London. 🐉





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# The rites of spring

*Easton Walled Gardens, Grantham, Lincolnshire*

New life erupts all around in the gardens and park at Easton once spring unfolds. Ursula Cholmeley takes a walk, relishing what the season will be bringing in the coming weeks

Photographs by Clive Nichols

L AMBS are in the park now. We can hear their bleating as they scamper around the roots of old trees in the ancient pastureland. Earlier, they would have been kept out of the garden by a ha-ha, which we have rebuilt, but it's not up to keeping a check on the activities of curious lambs, so there's a fence between them and the cedar meadow.

The meadow is filled with burgeoning growth. We have had the snowdrops and the aconites, the little blue *Chionodoxa* are fading and it's the time for tulips. They run through thick green grasses and young cow parsley. For maximum impact, we use the healthy tulip Apeldoorn Red, a vigorous hybrid that competes relatively successfully in a meadow environment. Most were planted last autumn and their numbers need topping up annually.

Among them, white pheasant's eye narcissi (*Narcissus poeticus recurvus*) are planted in drifts. These obliging bulbs breed like the rabbits in the park—so much so that they will need lifting, separating and replanting or they become congested and stop flowering. To prolong their contribution, they're planted

with *N. Actaea*, a named form of *Narcissus poeticus*. The two plants look similar but, as our *Actaea* flowers later, their combined season lasts for a month.

I would like to establish snake's-head fritillaries here (see 'Crowning glories', page 70), but, between the predations of pheasants and lily beetles, they don't stand much of a chance. Instead, I'm having more luck with *Anemone blanda*, whose cheerful blue flowers run around the fringes of the grass and under our timber meadow retreat. From its balcony, I can look out over the meadow to our giraffe sculptures. Thinking back to just 15 years ago, all of this was a mess of elder and brambles, but now it feels as if it's always been here; the short grass is home to cowslips, daisies and the delicate *Narcissus Hawera*.

Across the South Lawn from the Cedar Meadow and down behind a yew hedge, the view opens up to reveal the terraces dropping away to the River Witham. At this time of year, ➤

**Top: Leftover tulip bulbs are planted into the cut-flower borders. Right: Pheasant's eye and *Actaea narcissi* abound**











our terrace meadows are dedicated to cowslips, which have always been an emblem for me. Cowslips were the plant that my mother most talked about losing as houses were built around her childhood home and haunts.

In our part of Lincolnshire, there are still plenty lining the verges and ditches, but it's an important flower in my heart. I want them on the slopes and they want to grow in the lawn, so there's a bit of a stand-off. In spite of their desires, there are still good colonies in the right place and they're a cheerful sight flanking five flights of steps.

Above the steps, the foundations of an old orangery offer an outstanding view. Then, when I turn and walk across the site where the house

once stood and head towards the history room (formerly the laundry), I pass two patches of grass no more than 18ft by 10ft that we've made into 'mini meadows', packed with spring bulbs, including crocuses and wild tulips. Each year, they get closer to resembling a flowery mead and they're the ideal place to prove that you don't need masses of space to create a spring 'meadow'.

Close by is a small picket gate and a gravel path that leads to the potting sheds. Around their doorways, old Victorian terracotta pots are filled with any bulbs left over from our planting schemes and some favourite plants for pot work. Our tastes are as ephemeral as the season, but orange *Tulipa* Prinses Irene,

purple-and-white tulip Blueberry Ripple and blue or dark-red hyacinths usually make the cut.

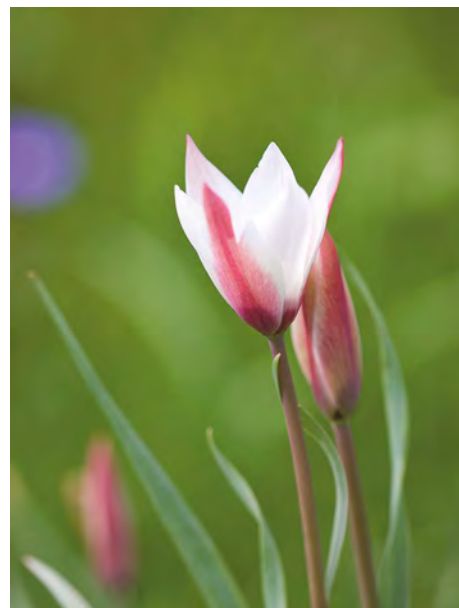
More pots are displayed on a wooden theatre mounted on the rough limestone wall, enabling a face-to-face encounter with little violas, common or garden primulas and auriculas. Like examining a close-up picture, it provides a moment for appreciation of things that are small and perfectly formed.

In front of the sheds, the cut-flower beds are being planted up with hardy seedlings raised over the winter and green manures are dug in. It won't be long now before the swallows return and swoop past, into the potting sheds. Holes in the doors allow them to zoom in and out and build their nests. ➤





*Above: Trees in the park are starting to green up and cowslips are a cheerful sight in the rough grass of the banks on either side of five flights of steps. Clockwise from top left: The slender species **Tulipa tarda**; **Tulipa clusiana** Peppermint Stick, with its lipstick streak on the reverse; white-edged **Tulipa Jackpot**; and deep-red **Tulipa Jan Reus***







*Above:* A little 'theatre' of pots in flower enables close inspection of auriculas or violas.  
*Right:* Scarlet and Blueberry Ripple tulips invigorate the beds

The osmanthus hedge lining the edge of the Pickery (our cut-flower garden) has just finished flowering. In a frost-free year, the blossom will scent the garden for weeks. On its far side, the Cottage Garden features some of our favourite tulips. Oranges and yellows, reds and whites, purples and bi-colour tulips are set off by blossom, *Cerinth* foliage, wallflowers and honesty. The success of these combinations depends on the harshness or otherwise of the winter; the tulips won't suffer unless rodents find them, but the biennials and blossom can look miserable. Temperatures of  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the unheated greenhouse are not uncommon in our sheltered valley.

Behind the cottage garden, two original greenhouses have been repaired and painted in a smoky green. They're filled with half-hardy plants ready to go out. In a cold year, dahlias

can get far too big before they're planted out, their vigour daring us to get a spade out and plant them in the deeply dug, manured soil awaiting them in the Pickery. They'll have to hang on until the soil feels warmer.

At least we don't need to worry about cold snaps, for Alexandra, our florist, has picked great bunches of flowers for displaying in the tearoom, where their spring beauty can be appreciated from the far side of a bowl of hot soup.

*Easton Walled Gardens, Grantham, Lincolnshire (www.eastonwalledgardens.co.uk; 01476 530063). Open March 1 to October 31, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday, 11am–5pm. Ursula Cholmeley and her team have been restoring the gardens from dereliction for the past 15 years*



### Our version of a flowery mead

To create a spring tapestry effect in a meadow, wild tulips enhance the complexity of the overall pattern and will flourish in thin grass. They work well with wild primroses, anemones, daisies, muscaris and dwarf narcissi.

***Tulipa sylvestris*** is a clear yellow. It reaches 12in and gives our planting scheme some height above *Narcissus Tête-à-Tête* and *Muscari latifolium*. It seems very happy, appearing annually, on poor, free-draining soil in full sun.

At RHS Wisley and again at RHS Rosemoor, I discovered ***Tulipa clusiana* Peppermint Stick**, which has all the delicacy of a wild tulip with an unusual bi-colour; it works perfectly on its own or in a mixed planting.

***Tulipa Little Beauty*** grows to just 5in tall and opens to reveal a heart of steely blue. This is a showstopper when placed close enough to a path to grab your attention.

Growing to 8in tall and multi-headed, ***Tulipa tarda*** came from a small group in the cottage garden that I split and moved while it was in flower. Traditionally, bulbs should be lifted when dormant, but they didn't seem to mind. In fact, I use this time of year to split many of our smaller bulbs that will be forgotten later in the year.











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# Tackling the big spring catch-up

**T**HE awakening season rouses the Orchard at Sissinghurst into blossom. First, it's the plums that stir into life, in March; then, pears in April; and, finally, in May, the swollen buds of apples rupture to reveal their delicate white flowers. Underneath the spreading branches of these fruit trees, narcissi planted in large drifts stud the floor with dots of colour, reminiscent of Botticelli's *Primavera*. And chasing them into flower is a host of other spring delights, right the way through the garden. The lengthening days bring about a feeling of urgency, heightened by the fact that visitors are returning now, to inspect the results of our winter work.

We aim to clear all of last season's growth before any new shoots begin to emerge. Sometimes, the spent flowers and foliage can simply be pulled away; alternatively, we use secateurs—or even shears—for larger drifts of plants, such as *Epimedium*. Occasionally, we use folding saws for cutting through particularly tough material, such as last year's spent *Miscanthus* stems in the Cottage Garden.

Although the dormant period of winter is usually the ideal time to move established shrubs, here, on our cold clay soil, we choose to wait until March. Recently, we moved a 12ft-high quince tree (planted five years ago) from the White Garden to a new home in the area known as Delos. Throughout the season, I regularly assess the planting in all the borders



Clearing tough materials such as spent *Miscanthus* may call for a saw

at Sissinghurst—sometimes, immediate action can be taken to improve the situation, adding or editing groups of plants here and there as the mood takes. However, larger-scale intervention usually needs to wait until the autumn, so I make notes in a garden diary to ensure nothing is forgotten when the time arrives.

If, like me, you didn't get round to tackling all of the planting

‘The lengthening days bring about a feeling of urgency’

improvements you'd intended to do last autumn, then you have another opportunity during March. For example, just recently, we used the dry weather to lift and divide a congested, shy-flowering group of *Hemerocallis* Stafford in the Cottage Garden.

Using a fork, we work all the way round the group, loosening the soil and gently teasing the roots away. When all the roots are free, we lift out the plant and begin splitting. Sometimes, it's possible to tear the clumps apart, but more often, you'll need to prise them apart with two

forks. We aim to replant quickly, to avoid undue stress on the plants, but we also pot up some as spares or to sell in our garden shop.

## Starting annuals

Now is the time to sow annuals, the plants that complete their life cycle in a single season. They can be divided into two groups: hardy and half-hardy. Hardy annuals are sown directly into the place where they are to flower and then perhaps simply left to self-sow in subsequent years.

Half-hardies are those that would be damaged if the temperature dropped below 0°C; these are sown in a pan under glass in early spring, into a proprietary low-nutrient seed compost. Once the germinated seeds are large enough to handle, they can be pricked out into larger pots or trays containing more fertile compost, to sustain growth. Within a few weeks, sufficient new growth of both leaves and roots will indicate the plants are ready to be planted out.

I like to try a few 'new to me' plants each year, so this spring, I'm sowing *Omphalodes liniifolia* and *Browallia americana* alongside firm favourites that include *Cosmos* Purity and *Ammi majus*. These are all destined for the White Garden, but, elsewhere, we're planning on growing an increasing range of zinnias. They were loved by Vita, but are a little out of fashion nowadays.

I'm also becoming interested in tracking down some of the dahlia varieties grown by Vita and Harold in the 1940s and 1950s for trying out in the cutting garden. As the season moves forward, the garden will continue a process of cloaking itself in even richer colours and this shift of gear brings an altogether different guise to the garden. 🦋

**Troy Scott Smith is head gardener at Sissinghurst, Kent**

**Next week: Getting to grips with primroses and their ilk**

## Horticultural aide memoire

### No. 12: Pollard foliage trees

Some ornamental trees can be coppiced annually to produce spectacularly large leaves.

These include *Paulownia tomentosa* and *Eucalyptus gunnii*. Now is the time to act. Ideally, the plants should have had a year in the ground to get settled. Take a pair of loppers and cut the main stem plus any suckers down to within a few inches of the ground. A vigorous reaction will soon send up a neat, outsize bush of new shoots, bearing foliage of fairytale vigour and beauty. Repeat this treatment annually to maintain the effect; a hard winter will sometimes do the work for you. **SCD**





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# Crowning glories

Steven Desmond explores the scents and sensibility of fritillaries in their many guises and  
Jacky Hobbs meets a collector

Photographs by Clive Nichols



*Left (from top to bottom):* ***Fritillaria affinis*, a variable species native to western North America; *Fritillaria meleagris*, the familiar snake's head fritillary, popular in gardens and at large in numerous English water meadows; and *Fritillaria aurea*, a dainty species found in the mountains of Turkey. Facing page: Gloriously gaudy: the majestic crown imperial with a variegated twist, *Fritillaria imperialis aureomarginata***

THESE is something about the genus *Fritillaria* that faintly alarms many gardeners. The fact that there are so many garden-worthy species should be an attraction, but merely seems to spread doubt and confusion. Then, there is the suggestion that they're difficult to grow and therefore best left to the specialist. And where some would like sunshine and sand, others prefer something akin to a marsh. If all this were not enough to put us off, there are persistent rumours of unseemly odours, which might make neighbours' eyebrows rise. Not very encouraging.

Let me, then, be clear. There is nothing to worry about. There are several easy garden species, plus a whole lot more that are well worth a try. They're all bulbs and therefore simple to handle and plant. And that smell? We'll talk about that.

Most of us are familiar with the snake's head fritillary, *Fritillaria meleagris*, which grows wild in abundance in some locations in this country. The only unnerving thing about it is its common name and the alternatives, such as dead man's bells, don't really help. The little bulbs are simple to push into the ground and make very good meadow material, especially if the soil is damp. They will seed themselves pleasantly around soon enough.

There is a lot of pleasure to be derived on a late-spring day from lying flat on the ground and looking through a lawnful of these flowers, so delicately constructed in hanging lanterns of finely chequered brown-reds, with an irregular sprinkling of off-white specimens.

The other common fritillary seen in gardens is something so entirely different that it takes some mental connecting with the first. This is the magnificently robust crown imperial, *F. imperialis*, from the stony places of the Orient. Everything about it is noble and grand and it always

seems to be a picture of health, like a prospering baby.

Each bulb is as big as your fist, suggesting that it will either come up like a rocket or rot in the ground. It's a good idea to plant it on edge on a handful of sharp sand. When it pushes through in the spring, all heads will turn to witness its heroic progress.

‘ I have always rather liked it, scent being a personal thing. You'll know as soon as you handle a bulb ,

At the top of the bright-green stem is an extraordinary tuft, a crown indeed, of greenery, on top of a ring of clear yellow flowers that, like all sensible spring blooms, hang down to protect the vital workings from the weather. If you turn up one of these flowers, you'll see six beads of nectar, irresistibly tempting for blue tits.

These six tears are the ones the crown imperial shed when, it is said, of all the flowers in the garden of Gethsemane, it declined to lower its head when Jesus walked in and it subsequently reflected on the error of its ways. This is a big specimen in the spring garden and looks best in groups of half a dozen, perhaps with a supporting cast of tulips in related hues, in front of a shrub waiting to perform later in the year. If yellow isn't for you, there is a rather good sober red, with suitably attuned stem, called William Rex, which may be more your cup of tea.

Just before the shoots appear above ground, your nose will begin to twitch. The drains are fine, there's no dead fox in the shrubbery: it can only be the crown imperials. Some people won't grow this plant on account ➤







## Growing fritillaries

**Specialist Laurence Hill (right) advises:**

The single most important aspect of growing fritillaries is the growing medium, which should be both free draining and moisture retentive. I use a mixture of loam-based compost, grit, humus (leaf mould or bark) and Perlite.

***Fritillaria meleagris*, the snake's head fritillary that occurs in some water meadows of the Thames valley, is best sown or planted into moist wild-flower meadows and mown in late summer (when grown from seed, it takes four years to flower). It will grow equally well in a damp border, given some shade. *Fritillaria montana* and *F. pyrenaica* can be planted in similar locations.**

*Fritillaria persica* and the statuesque *F. imperialis*, the popular crown imperial, with its exotic pineapple-like plumage, are good for spring borders, although Beth Chatto grows crown imperials successfully under the eaves of a mature oak tree.

**For the border, try *F. elwesii*, *F. pontica* and *F. uva-vulpis*, which are easy to find from online nurseries and tolerate our variable summer weather. Those suited to both the border and the rock garden include *F. acmopetala*, *F. bithynica* and *F. thunbergii*. *F. orientalis* should be sited in a raised bed as the stems have a habit of leaning.**

If attempting trickier species from the Mediterranean, *F. forbesii* from Turkey for example, or *F. biflora*, from southern coastal California, you may need a glasshouse to shelter them from winter frost and summer rain; similarly, *F. aurea* and *F. gibbosa* require very careful watering during the cold months although they're fully hardy.

### Where to buy bulbs

Pitcairn Alpines: 01738 583213;  
www.pitcairnalpines.co.uk  
Janis Ruksans: www.rarebulbs.lv/  
index.php/en  
Jacques Amand: 020-8420 7110;  
www.jacquesamandintl.com

### Where to get seeds

*Fritillaria* Group of the Alpine Garden Society (www.fritillaria.org.uk): members only, but wide variety of inexpensive and often rare species. Allow five years to flower from seed



**Above: *Fritillaria carica* in its brown-and-yellow form.**

**Below: A portion of Laurence Hill's potted collection, including, on left, aubergine-dark *Fritillaria montana*, which ranges across mainland Europe**



of the aroma, but I have always rather liked it, scent being a personal thing. You'll know as soon as you handle a bulb, so you can decide in advance.

As I said at the outset, this is a large genus full of choice things (see 'The collector', facing page and left). Among them, I have three personal favourites. The first is *Fritillaria persica*. This is a creature of elusive beauty, with smokily dark flowers, a little inclined to be clobbered by spring frosts and so an ideal candidate for the woodland garden.

*F. acmopetala* is one of the many slightly built species, with its flowers vertically striped with greenish yellow and brown (if you're a fan of bilious colours, this is the genus for you) and turned up at the edges, Tinkerbelle-fashion.

And another: *F. michailovskyi*, one for the enthusiast and therefore possessed of the requisite challenging name. This is another little fellow, with its bells of purplish-brown down to a waist, then swelling out again to a turned-up rim of egg-yolk yellow. This one needs the proverbial perfect drainage, so is an obvious candidate for the gritty shelves of the alpine house, where its added attraction of a grape-like bloom can be admired at leisure.

The choice is never-ending in this genus of subtly fascinating plants, each of which rewards the patient observer with fresh and original beauties. 🐉



# The collector

Jacky Hobbs meets a man with a fritillary mission

**I**N the Richmond garden of aficionado Laurence Hill, more than 700 pots of *Fritillaria* have been numbered and catalogued. This unique collection contains not only 120 of the 140 species, but also multiple representatives of numerous species, gathered from different locations. Here lies the source of Mr Hill's fascination, observing small differences that occur across a plant's natural distribution and the broader insight this conveys.

**‘Groups of photos and broken parts are “stitched” together like a botanical jigsaw’**

Bulbs and seeds are acquired from friends and colleagues around the world, donated by botanic gardens or purchased from specialist suppliers of wild collected seeds and, of course, via Mr Hill's own observations of plants in the wild. For example, although Japan is modern and accessible, only one of its eight endemic *Fritillaria* is available from specialist nurseries and little practical cultivation advice is published.

So, despite language barriers, Mr Hill has visited more than 50 *Fritillaria*

populations during six visits to Japan. About 100 miles west of Tokyo lies Mount Takakusa, where the American Don Elick reported seeing *Fritillaria koidzumiana* growing ‘in deep, peaty soil in a climate so utterly vile that it would do well in England’. Mr Hill's own walk, 40 years later, up a narrow trail through the carefully tended tea bushes was rewarded when he found, hidden in the bamboo scrub in deep, humus-rich soil, a few of the tiny fritillary flowers that had been his quest.

Most of Mr Hill's Richmond collection is nurtured in individual pots, plunged into sand-filled frames for climate control and, where necessary, protected from rain, but an unusual facet of the collection is its contribution to an international reference database ([www.fritillariaicones.com](http://www.fritillariaicones.com)). Throughout their growing cycle, individual specimens are unearthed, gently cleaned of soil, washed and dried. Then, the pristine plants and any broken roots are laid on paper and photographed. Groups of photos and broken parts are then ‘stitched’ together in Photoshop like a botanical jigsaw to create ‘living specimens’ of the entire plant from flower to root tip.

Unlike traditional herbarium specimens, these plants are re-potted and grown on for further observations. Mr Hill has repeated this process hundreds of times over the past decade, forming a unique plant database for botanists and enthusiasts around the world. 🐸

*Clockwise from right: **Fritillaria gibbosa**, a native of Iran and Afghanistan, can be variable in its depth of colour; dainty **Fritillaria amana** Cambridge, a species native to the Levant; gaily striped **Fritillaria fleischeriana**; and the pink delicacy **Fritillaria ayakoana**, a rare endemic of Japan*







# Under the great glass roof

Mark Griffiths identifies a revival in the grand-gesture conservatory and suggests the best ranges of plants with which to furnish them

IT took the First World War, with its resulting staff and fuel shortages and a principled turning-away from conspicuous leisure, to take the shine off conservatories. For generations before that conflict, they'd been beloved domestic temples, consecrated to horticultural and architectural excellence and gracious living—all good things. What finally shattered them was the social upheaval that followed the end of the war. But, in recent times, our second great conservatory era has begun—and it is one that promises to be even greater than the first.

In their day, the Victorian structures were triumphs of progressive engineering and horticulture. Likewise, the new breed of conservatory is innovative, exploiting new materials and technology while conserving the best design features of the old. Many Victorian conservatories contained a few permanent stalwarts—**palms** and **ferns** in beds and tubs; climbers scaling the ironwork. These furnished the set for a changing performance of **forced bulbs** and **blossoming shrubs** and other pot plants that were returned to service glasshouses or placed outside once they'd ceased flowering. Requiring considerable resources, this endless window-dressing was partly to blame for the conservatory's 20th-century decline.

Nevertheless, some short-term visitors are invaluable. When winter's at its gloomiest,

few things gladden more than pots of **paper-white narcissi** or a hardy shrub or small tree such as **Prunus mume Beni-chidori**, whose tub can be put outside again once it has finished filling the conservatory with perfume and colour.

To these, we can add the legion of borderline-hardy specimens which, just a decade ago, we hoped would cope with our weather year-round. All those **oranges, lemons, olives, oleanders, pomegranates, mimosas, agaves** and **aloes** first featured long ago in our gardens as container-grown specialties, overwintered under cover in the orangery and displayed outside in summer. As our climate has yet to turn Mediterranean, that old practice seems eminently sensible once more.

## First, pick your climate

Such temporary residents apart, the 21st-century conservatory is best approached with the same expectations of permanence and sense of ecological harmony that we now bring to planting the garden. In other words, decide on the conditions that you wish to provide and the habitat or look that you wish to create and select plants suited to them.

For example, some of the most successful new conservatories are interior xeriscapes: sunny-seeming, even on dull days, and

crisply arid in atmosphere. Filled with fast-draining, gritty, loam-based compost, their beds are living-sculpture parks of **cacti**, other **succulents** and sword-leaved **Dasy-lirion longissimum**, **Dracaena draco** and **Yucca rostrata**. Kept on the dry side in winter, these plants will tolerate low temperatures (certainly down to 40°F (4°C)) and need little or no shading and supplementary humidity at any time.

Close to them in needs—and consorting happily with them—are **mimosas** such as **Acacia baileyana** and **A. retinodes** and smaller, but no less powerfully scented, shrubs such as **Boronia megastigma** and **Prostanthera rotundifolia**. Provide patches or pots of low-fertility, sandy acid soil and plentiful water in the growing season and you can entertain members of the Proteaceae such as **Protea cynaroides** (magnificent flowerheads) and **Leucadendron Safari Sunset** (refulgent foliage) and those supremely architectural rush-lookalikes the restios **Calopsis**, **Elegia** and **Rhodocoma**.

The climbers **Hardenbergia comptoniana** and **H. violacea** flourish in these brighter and drier surrounds, clothing walls, posts and glazing bars with handsome leaves and mauve pea flowers. For bolder statements, there are **Cussonia paniculata**, a shrub with immense, powder-blue handspans, and those paddle-leaved giants the birds of paradise **Strelitzia reginae** and **S. nicolai**.

## Palmy days

Going dry needn't be a farewell to the palm-court ambience. The hardy fan palm **Chamaerops humilis var. argentea** is so forgiving of drought and sun and so brilliant a steel blue that it seems wasted outdoors when it could be basking under glass and admiring gazes. Close to it in colour and resilience is the feather-fronded **Phoenix theophrasti**, an altogether hotter date than the familiar but thuggish **P. canariensis**.

For the same lightning *éclat* on a far grander scale, consider **Brahea armata**, the blue hesper palm, a magnificent backdrop or centrepiece. As for the fine detail, the grace notes, highlights and accents, all of the vast palette of **Pelargonium** cultivars will exult in these conditions and so, if attentively watered, will temporary residents such as display pots of early-flowering bulbs and tubs of hibernating **Citrus**, **oleander** and **olives**.

The alternative to this homage to veldt, maquis, chaparral and desert is the lush saturated greenery for which the first conservatory-planters strove. For this, you'll need more water and humidity, minimum winter temperatures between 50°F (10°C) and 60°F (15°C) and shade (some of it provided





Facing page: Sandy, acid soil suits *Protea cynaroides*, with its magnificent flowerheads. Above: The ideal conservatory serves both plants and people

by the plants themselves). For the beds and major planters, provide a loam-based compost that's richer in organic matter, but still fast-draining. Given these, you can head for the jungle and make an emerald pavilion of your crystal palace.

To clothe its walls and spans, you'll need climbers, planted in borders or large tubs and trained on wires or trellis attached to the glazing bars. For perfume and long performance, the tender white jasmines *Jasminum polyanthum* and *J. sambac* are without equal. For cascades of gold,

choose *Jasminum mesnyi*, which resembles an outside winter jasmine, and *Thunbergia mysorensis*, whose tresses of gilt and cinabar snapdragons, hanging from an arch or bower, form a breathtaking guard of honour.

For something richer and stranger still, consider *Passiflora*, whose tender species and cultivars offer flowers of neon luminosity and bewitching intricacy. In cool, damp and shady spots, *Muehlenbeckia complexa* will envelop posts and rafters with black, wiry stems and lilliputian leaves; the creeping fig, *Ficus pumila*, will inch, ivy-like, over

brickwork; Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*) will send up spiralling, fretwork fronds and the Chilean bellflower (*Lapageria rosea*) will ring out from the gloom in radiant candy pink.

If, as is often the case with traditional conservatories, yours has narrow beds under the staging, the more robust among these climbers can be planted in them, with their stems trained through the gap (enlarged if necessary) between the rear of the staging and the wall or glazing. These under-staging beds are practical, ➤





**Left:** It's a jungle in there: given support, climbers will romp away and paddle-leaved *Strelitzia* make bold statement plants.

**Above:** Calamondin is an ideal citrus to be grown in the conservatory

increasing humidity, absorbing run-off from watering and damping down. But they can be ornamental, too, planted with ground-smothering shade-lovers—a patchwork of *Hedera* cultivars, for example, or of the mossy *Soleirolia soleirolii* and *Selaginella kraussiana*, both of which come in vivid green, golden and variegated forms.

Together with *Ficus pumila*, these last two will also fill gaps in paving, cushion the feet of walls and urns or colonise the margins and sides of pools and raised beds. They're invaluable in creating that air of long-settled naturalness, of casual, unchecked profusion, which gives the jungly conservatory true character.

## Fern frenzy

With the walls and floors upholstered, turn next to the canopy and to tree ferns that, with palms, were the colossi of the first great conservatory era. Without high humidity and regular hosing-down, large specimens of the widely available *Dicksonia antarctica* tend to suffer under glass.

Instead, go for *Cyathea*, gratifyingly fast-growing and with slender trunks crowned with parasols of majestic elegance.

The two most dependable are *Cyathea medullaris*, massive with black-stalked, bright-green fronds, and the less bulky *C. dealbata*, with silver-backed foliage. Both tolerate temperatures to just above freezing and all but the fiercest sun, although they perform best in dappled shade. Planted in a tub or bed in a fertile acid soil that's not allowed to dry out, one well-positioned specimen of either will be the making of a conservatory.

Among these giants' smaller cousins, pots of *Adiantum raddianum* and *Pteris cretica*, the maidenhair and ribbon ferns respectively, will form the perfect foil for flowering plants such as *Streptocarpus* and *Cymbidium* on the staging. *Cyrtomium falcatum* and *Woodwardia radicans*, the holly and chain ferns, are luxuriant underplanting for shady borders.

Two Victorian conservatory favourites, *Davallia mariesii* and *D. canariensis*, are never happier than when hung from the beams in baskets like lanterns of lacy verdure.

Suspension also suits *Phlebodium aureum*, a fern with boldly cut fronds in aquamarine and an unusual liking for sunshine.

Similar to palms in looks are the cycads. The most widely sold is *Cycas revoluta*, with stout dark brown trunks crowned with feathery dark-green leaves. Tolerating a wide range of conditions and temperatures down to freezing, it's a conservatory staple and stalwart, but other kinds are equally dependable. For example, *Dioon edule*, a shuttlecock of stiff sage-green fronds, is drought- and sunproof, good company for succulents and Mediterranean-type plants.

For broad-leaved shrubs that shout 'jungle', consider various genera in the family Araliaceae. Although, these days, we tend to venture *Fatsia*, *Tetrapanax*, *Pseudopanax* and *Schefflera* outdoors, they were once conservatory stars and deservedly so.

For floral rather than foliar flamboyance, there's a vast range of shrubs, from *Brugmansia* in pearly to peach pleated taffeta to *Tibouchina* in violet velvet. The same goes for perennials—they're too many and various to mention here. I would, however, urge you to look beyond the ubiquitous *Phalaenopsis* when choosing orchids for your conservatory: the most diverse family in the Plant Kingdom, Orchidaceae has so much more to offer.

A final plea, if I may. In your domestic rain forest, let there be water—not just splashed around to raise the humidity in that uniquely scented fog that's conservatory fug, but in pools, tubs and barrels sited in the sunniest spots. From these, you can conjure such prodigies as *Colocasia Black Magic*, with heart-shaped leaves in smoky satin; tropical waterlilies such as the lavender *Nymphaea capensis*, *Cyperus papyrus*, the papyrus of Ancient Egypt, and a plant of even greater history and beauty, *Nelumbo nucifera*, the sacred lotus. 🐸



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# Silken wall hangings come to life

Mark Griffiths finds much to recommend among the newer magnolias, many of which are quite as ravishing as their illustrious parent species

Photographs by Clive Nichols

**L**ATE last winter, I called at The Garden, a florist and plant emporium that is one of the jewels of Oxford's Covered Market. I'd gone there looking for lily corms. Instead, I came away with a Black Tulip, a sturdy young specimen decked with blooms and buds. As I carried it home through the Saturday crowds, I was waylaid by shoppers. Several wanted no more than to take a closer look; others asked for details; one of them just smiled knowingly and said: 'You lucky fellow.'

My prize was not an actual black tulip, but the magnolia cultivar that goes by that name. But, as with 'black' tulips, its flowers aren't truly sable. Rather, they emerge from fleecy cowl as quenelles the colour of *crème de cassis*. Time and sunshine play Champagne to this pigment, taking the blooms through progressively lighter shades of Kir Royale.

Shimmering and heavy of substance, the petals remain incurved after opening, making

snifter-shaped flowers 4in–6in across. This is not large by magnolia standards, but compactness befits their intense colouring and their profusion, borne the length of bare grey branches, gives a mature specimen an air of astonishing opulence. Even a youngster has the look of some Chinoiserie fantasy, of a silken wall hanging brought to life.

Apart from the usual ground preparation at planting—and watering and feeding until established—it's unfussy, flourishing in full sun or dappled shade on any well-drained soil that isn't sourly acid or stiffly alkaline. Black Tulip is that rare thing: a plant that's easy to grow, but which has all the impact and cachet of something improbably gorgeous, exacting and exotic. Little wonder that it's being given pride of place in some illustrious gardens—at Clarence House, for example, where Aung San Suu Kyi joined The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall in planting one in June 2012.

This masterpiece is the work of magnolia breeder Mark Jury, whose garden and nursery are at Tikorangi in New Zealand. His late father, Felix, began the quest for compact and floriferous deep red and purple cultivars back in the 1970s, when he crossed the shrubby, puce-flowered *M. liliiflora* Nigra with the lofty, luscious crimson *M. campbellii* subsp. *mollicomata* Lanarth. The outcome was the revolutionary Vulcan, a small, candelabrum-branched tree with massive flowers that are ruby in climates with reliably warm spring weather, but more usually cerise-hued in ours.

Mark has continued this work, raising hundreds of seedlings and naming only the finest. The list includes Felix Jury, a breathtaking tree in March, when its bare, ➤

*Above: Magnolia stellata* King Rose. Its white flowers bear a hint of palest pink on the reverse. *Facing page: Magnolia x soulangeana* in full sail in a Devonshire garden









Clockwise from above: **Wisley's delight: *Magnolia x campbellii*** bears huge flowers; **Black Tulip's** cupped blooms lighten as they mature; and **Butterflies**, a hybrid of *M. acuminata* and *M. denudata*

pyramidal frame erupts in foot-wide bowls of raspberry and antique rose. The latest triumph to emerge from Tikorangi is a striking departure from this colour range. *Magnolia* Honey Tulip replicates the neat habit and generously produced, globose blooms of Black Tulip, but it's a luminous butter yellow.

Although they're bred in New Zealand and their ancestral species are largely Asian, the Jury magnolias are of a kind that has captivated discerning British gardeners, being deciduous and with flowers that are spectacular and precocious (meaning that they open before the new leaves expand).

The first such to be introduced to Britain was *Magnolia denudata*, which arrived in the 1780s. In its native China, it's known as Yulan—literally, 'jade orchid', a name that repays unpacking. In this species, the petals are sublime, sparkling white, not green, greenish or mutton-fat-coloured: in this instance, 'jade' stands for something precious. At 6in across, its blooms are

larger and showier than any Chinese orchid's; indeed, 'orchid' in this context is a trope for flowers of high material and moral value—especially if deliciously fragrant. (Those of *Magnolia denudata*, like China's revered *Cymbidium* orchids, most certainly are.) Yulan, then, was a prestige plant.

So, to a lesser extent, was Mulan ('woody orchid') or *M. liliiflora*, bushier and with more tapered flowers in pink- and purple-flushed cream. As early as the Song Dynasty, they were hailed in poetry, portrayed on paper, fabric and porcelain and planted in the gardens of emperors, grantees and temples. A large part of their enchantment lay in the magic of a seemingly lifeless tree's bursting into blooms of such size, sweetness and purity.

## Imperial imports

By the end of the 19th century, Britain's ruling classes were outdoing China's ➤

## Mollycoddling optional

Although they grow so well in the South-West, it would be wrong to imagine that magnolias need a life of luxury. There are reports of success from the Midlands and points further north and they flourish in the Home Counties, notably at the RHS Garden Wisley, where these photographs were taken. The society's Executive Vice President, Jim Gardiner, one of the world's leading experts in the genus, has developed at Wisley a magnificent collection that displays not only the diversity of magnolias, but also their adaptability in the garden.

Away from the balmy South-West, magnolias may take longer to establish and they will probably flower a little later. But hardiness is no bar to giving them a go, especially if you can offer a degree of side protection (such as surrounding trees or nearby walls) and a well-prepared, fertile, acid to neutral soil. In their first years, feed, water and (in long, hard freezes) provide winter-fleece protection until, to use that invaluable gardener's phrase, they 'get away'.





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In time, *Magnolia* Galaxy forms a neat tree

emperors, designing large landscapes expressly to show magnolias to best advantage. At one of them, Caerhays Castle, on Cornwall's Roseland Peninsula, six generations of the Williams family have turned several hundred acres of slopes and ravines into a treasury of world flora and a powerhouse of horticultural innovation; among their specialties is *Magnolia*.

The family sponsored several of our most intrepid plant-explorers so that their Cornish cove welcomed, a century ago, new-found glories from the Himalayas and China. Among them are forms of *Magnolia campbellii*, the beautiful giant of the genus, which fills the late-February sky with immense, lotus-like blooms in shades of white, pink and crimson. There is also *Magnolia sprengeri*, a smaller but no less heart-stopping version, with more intensely coloured and perfumed flowers.

From introductions such as these, Caerhays has produced such *château*-bottled marvels as Philip Tregunna, a tower of a tree smothered in lilac and magenta tulips in electrifying contrast to its gunmetal bark; and Caerhays Belle, heavy with huge ruffled blooms in flamingo pink.

As a collector's passion, these noble trees are ideal for gardeners with acreage and especially for those with woods and slopes in need of upgrading to enchanted grove and magic mountain. But there's room for one or two even in small gardens and some of the more glamorous cultivars are better suited to them than the over-used *M. x soulangeana*, being more decorous and disciplined in habit and swift to mature.

These include Black Tulip, Felix Jury and Caerhays Surprise. Nor is country air essential. Among the oldest flowering plants that evolved, *Magnolia* was forged in epochs of heavy (if natural) atmospheric

pollution. Like another primeval survivor, *Ginkgo biloba*, it thrives in cities. Grown as standards, some of the larger cultivars, such as primrose-hued Elizabeth and blushing Galaxy, make outstanding street trees, happy to root under paving and tarmac.

But suppose you find these magnolias precocious in another sense—too forward and look-at-me, too showy to mix with the rest of your spring garden. Then, consider *M. stellata*, twiggy, compact and rarely more than 8ft tall. From March onwards, it is swarmed with demure white flowers composed of many slender petals, which flutter in the breeze. In its native Japan, it's known as *shide-kobushi*, from *shide*, the pristine paper streamers that are hung on sacred sites, buildings, objects and trees.

In nature, this living shrine is found in swampy ground, a habitat whose garden equivalents it loves. Ours, for example, grows in a pond on an island turfed with golden-leaved *Acorus* Ogon. On lakesides, it resembles a roost of miniature egrets, in dazzling contrast to winter-lacquered willows and dogwoods. But it will also flourish on averagely moist ground and this, combined with its scale and finesse, makes it a perfect shrub for early spring borders, amid hellebores, bulbs, *Bergenia* and *Pulmonaria*.

For something similar but larger, try *Magnolia x loebneri*, small and gracefully spreading trees that result from the crossing of *M. stellata* with its compatriot *M. kobus*. Although not so fond of wet spots, these will tolerate chalky soil, which can be no less useful. Pure-white selections include Ballerina, with narrow tousled petals, and the more densely double Wildcat, but the star has to be *M. x loebneri* Leonard Messel, which makes a cloud of ethereal pink.

This variety arose spontaneously at Nymans in West Sussex in the great garden developed by Col Messel, birthplace of so many remarkable plants. There's no better proof that magnolias, however exotic their roots and looks, are at home in Britain. Let's welcome more of them. 🐝

## See magnolias this spring

### Borde Hill Garden

Borde Hill Lane, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1XP (01444 450326; [www.bordehill.co.uk](http://www.bordehill.co.uk)). Guided magnolia tours for pre-booked groups, between March 24 and April 15, as well as guided tours for visitors not in a group, on Thursdays at 11.30am. A free magnolia map is also available for self-guided walks. Many are the original plants collected by the great plant-hunters of the early 1900s

### Caerhays Castle Gardens

Gorran, St Austell, Cornwall PL26 6LY (01872 501310; [www.caerhays.co.uk](http://www.caerhays.co.uk)). The gardens are open now, until June 21

### Nymans

Handcross, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH17 6EB ([www.nationaltrust.org.uk/nymans](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/nymans); 01444 405250). Open daily

### RHS Garden Wisley

Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB (0845 260 9000; [www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley](http://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley)). Open daily



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**C**HINTHURST HILL is a substantial house near Wonersh, which stands on a south-facing steep slope overlooking the Wey valley and the Surrey countryside. Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and built in 1893–95, it was then the architect's largest and most important work. Yet it is little known and seldom mentioned. The house was never published in the pages of *COUNTRY LIFE* and was not referred to in either Lawrence Weaver's *Houses and Gardens by E. L. Lutyens* or in the three 'Memorial' volumes by A. S. G. Butler devoted to his work.

“This house was the romance of my life, a symbol of adventure”

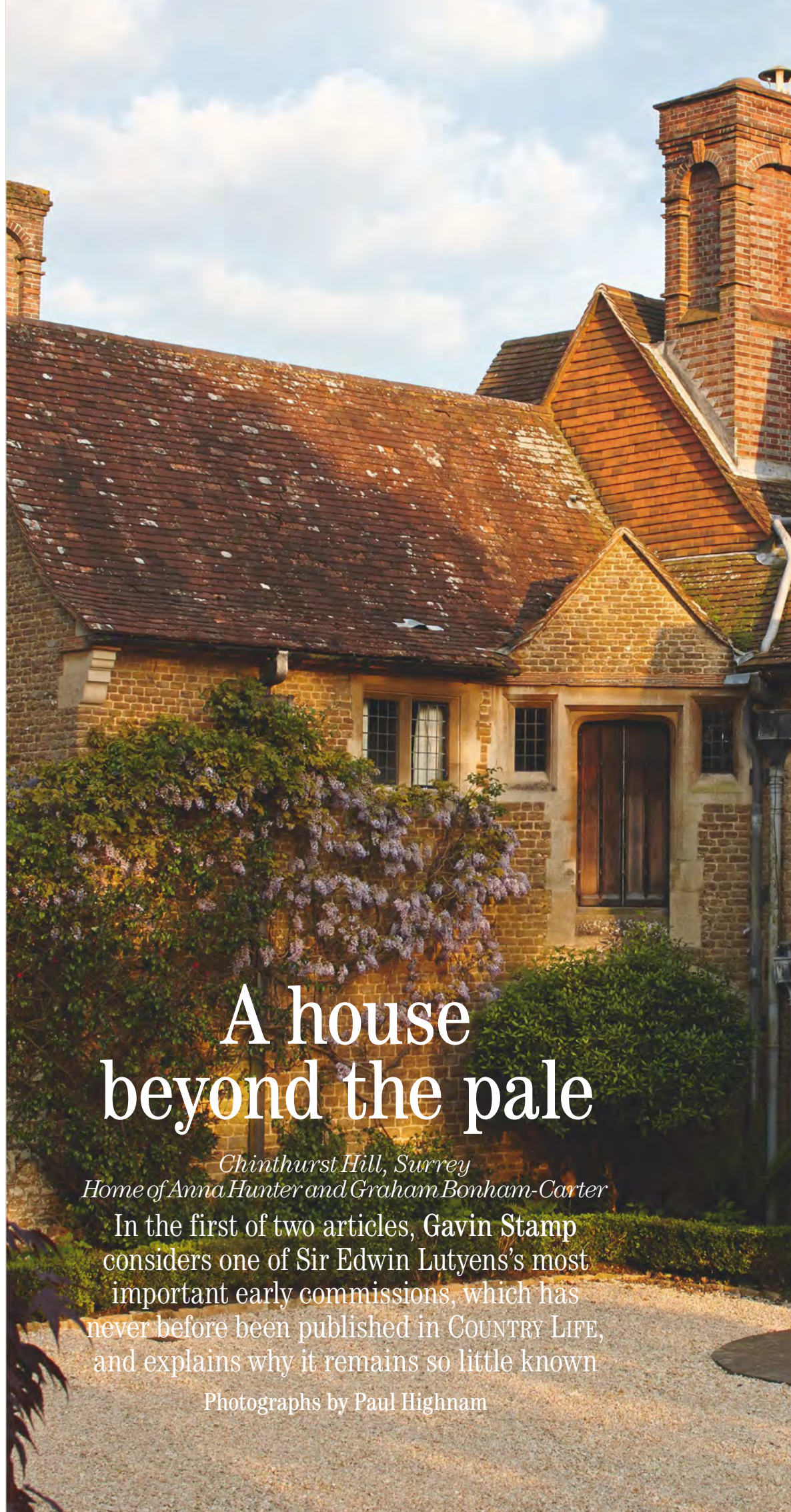
It was, however, both mentioned and described by the architect's biographer, Christopher Hussey, but he thought that 'the impression given, both by the reality and by the sketches, is that, at this stage, the young Lutyens was experimenting in materials and techniques at the cost of coherent design, in which the whole is somewhat lacking'.

Others have been similarly unimpressed; Ian Nairn later concurred in thinking that Chinthurst Hill was designed 'before he had found his feet, architecturally speaking. Fine hill-side site above the river valley, inadequately served by a limp assembly of gables and bow windows'.

Such faint praise seems incomprehensibly blinkered when confronted by the house itself. It is a dramatic composition that brilliantly exploits the magnificent sloping site, allowing an additional floor on the south side and garden terraces below (*Fig 3*). It is a composition of gabled masses and tall bays (no bows, in fact), with a careful balance of uprights and horizontals and with the unbroken planes of roof and wall typical of the architect.

It displays all of Lutyens's mastery of three-dimensional form, exploiting the possibilities of different levels—there is a covered way through the entrance elevation that leads to a high ➤

*Fig 1: The north-facing entrance front of Chinthurst Hill; to the left is the first-floor luggage door that so delighted the young Harry Goodhart-Rendel*



## A house beyond the pale

*Chinthurst Hill, Surrey  
Home of Anna Hunter and Graham Bonham-Carter*

In the first of two articles, Gavin Stamp considers one of Sir Edwin Lutyens's most important early commissions, which has never before been published in *COUNTRY LIFE*, and explains why it remains so little known

Photographs by Paul Highnam









and hidden courtyard, from which a discreet staircase descends to reach the gardens. It is certainly a young man's work, inventive and experimental, full of ideas he wanted to explore and with details hinting at debts to buildings by other architects (a challenge for the architectural historian).

And it has the magic, the personal quality that is lacking in Lutyens's first few buildings, but is characteristic of what was to come. For the young Harry Goodhart-Rendel, who lived in Chinthurst Hill as a boy, it was 'for some years to be the romance of my life', an 'architectural symbol of life and adventure' that made him want to become an architect—although 'from my mother's point of view it proved remarkably inconvenient'.

It may, therefore, seem puzzling that Chinthurst Hill is conventionally omitted from the Lutyens story. This was a 'canon' largely determined by COUNTRY LIFE. Between the magazine and the architect, there was a symbiotic relationship; Edward Hudson, founder, was captivated by Lutyens, commissioned three homes from him,

and published his work. The interpretation established by COUNTRY LIFE was of a young architect working in the 'Picturesque' tradition much influenced by Norman Shaw, Philip Webb and Sir Ernest George, the architect in whose office he briefly worked.

Weaver was happy to illustrate some of the other early houses, much in the manner of Shaw and George, which had been built before 1897, when the magazine was founded. But he made it clear that he thought that Lutyens only really became interesting and praiseworthy when he designed Munstead Wood (a smaller house than Chinthurst Hill) for his mentor and collaborator Gertrude Jekyll. After that came the great houses in the romantic Surrey Tudor vernacular manner, such as nearby Orchards, followed by the turn to Classicism.

Chinthurst was not the only house censored by COUNTRY LIFE. There were those highly inventive, almost eccentric houses touched by the 'New Art' at the end of the 1890s and comparable with the work of C. R. Mackintosh. These included the Ferry Inn at

Rosneath for Princess Louise, where Goodhart-Rendel thought 'we first feel there is magic in the air'. Among the others, Le Bois des Moutiers in France was only published in this magazine in May 1981 and Berrydown in Hampshire in June 12, 2013.

However, the conservatism of COUNTRY LIFE was not the sole reason for Chinthurst's exclusion. It seems to have turned out to be an embarrassing commission, one that left the client unhappy and disgruntled. It is therefore likely that it was Lutyens himself who did not wish the house to be published. If so, he was not the first, and certainly not the last, famous architect who tried to rewrite his own history.

The story of Chinthurst Hill is puzzling and complicated. It was first elucidated by Jane Brown in her book *Lutyens and the Edwardians*. The commission came through the social connections in west Surrey that gave Lutyens all his early jobs. The client was Amelia Margaret Guthrie, known as Maggie, the daughter of Ellinor Arbuthnot, a cousin of the gardener Harry Mangles. Guthrie, who was older

**Fig 2: A view of the house from the south-east. The wing containing the smoking room, drawing room and main bedroom is on the far left, the former stable wing is on the right**





than Lutyens and unmarried, had owned the land since 1884, but only decided to build on it in nine years later. By this time, she had begun to study at the London School of Medicine for Women, intending to be a doctor.

She must have been happy at first to give her young architect a free hand, for the story goes—according to her sister Violet—that when she eventually returned from London to see the finished result, she was horrified. There were too many rooms facing north (although the principal bedrooms and reception rooms, in fact, all face south and the view) and she paid off her architect.

This seems implausible. Although she may have taken little interest, Guthrie must have approved the plans (it is always possible that she could not read them) and was surely consulted by her architect during the building process, particularly about such personal details as the monogrammed doorplates and the use of a mother-of-pearl inlay.

Besides, Chinthurst Hill was easy to reach from London, with Bramley

station just under a mile away and the busy mainline station at Guildford only a couple of miles further, so it seems surprising if she did not briefly pop down to Surrey to inspect progress on her new home for well over a year.

## ‘Inventive and experimental, Chinthurst is certainly a young man’s work’

It is much more likely that it was not Maggie, but her fiancé, Ninian Elliot, who disliked the house. They had met in Scotland, married in 1896 and moved to Mull soon afterwards, putting Chinthurst Hill on the market in 1897. Jane Brown suggests another reason for her disillusionment: ‘Was it possible—though she was eleven years older than Lutyens she looked younger—that her heart ruled her head?’ For, in 1893, Lutyens was also

unmarried and it was not until three years later that he began to court his future wife, Lady Emily Lytton.

Another version of events was later recorded by Lady Sackville, who heard it from the metalworker Starkie Gardner: ‘He told me how L[utyens] was so disappointed with his first house, and yet did not prosecute the Lady or ask for any money from her, which started him with a good reputation, as Miss Jekyll then took him up and helped him tremendously.’

Certainly, Lutyens was embarrassed by this failure and never revisited Chinthurst Hill. Whatever had, in fact, transpired, this early commission probably did Lutyens some professional damage. Guthrie seems to have made her displeasure plain and when, after Lord Rendel bought the house for his widowed daughter and her son, he wanted additions to be made at his own Surrey home, Hatchlands, in 1903, he employed Sir Reginald Blomfield and let it be known that Lutyens had cost him enough already because of the alterations he had felt obliged to carry out at Chinthurst Hill. ➤

**Fig 3: A view of Chinthurst Hill from the restored gardens to the west. The original plans for this double 180ft-long herbaceous border are in the Gertrude Jekyll archive in Berkeley, California**



At first, the architect, if not the client, must have been pleased with Chinthurst Hill, as there is a stone bearing the inscription: 'This house was built by/Aemilia Margaret Guthrie/October 1893–March 1895/James Simpson. Builder/William Herbert. Mason/Edwin Lutyens. Architect.'

It is certainly superbly built of the local Burgate stone, but as 'dressed and pointed rubble' and not, as Hussey noted, 'laid in the native way as in his subsequent, better known, vernacular work'. Ashlar was used for the long horizontal runs of mullioned windows with leaded glass and many of the gables are tile hung.

‘Lutyens was not the first, and certainly not the last, famous architect to try to rewrite his own history’

Above the long sweeps of tiled roof rise very tall chimneys, but these, surprisingly, are not built of a mellow red brick, but of a rather hard glazed brick and are modelled with recessed blank arches. Goodhart-Rendel thought that these 'rather exaggerated chimneys... descend from Street not through George but through Norman Shaw', to whose domestic work the whole exterior is obviously much indebted.

Guthrie apparently thought the house was built back to front, but it made perfect sense for Lutyens to have placed the entrance on the north, sheltered side. The arches of the front door are Tudor, but, inside, the porch is an unusual barrel vault of stone with bands of thin tiles—a motif Lutyens would repeat in his later houses, such as Orchards.

The entrance elevation is a clever composition of gables and in the chamfered corner where the stable wing adjoins is a mysterious door placed high and out of reach. This was one of the 'marvels of the place' that delighted the young Goodhart-Rendel, a 'thrilling outside door, in an upper passage, that opened on nothing, but through which luggage could be hoisted from the roof of a carriage standing below' (*Fig 1*).

The garden front is much taller,



**Fig 4: The central section of the garden front with the Gothic windows that light the hall and the loggia below; the upper row of windows is a later alteration**

as Lutyens cleverly used the slope to fit in more rooms below the ground floor and the hall and he also placed the kitchen wing at this lower level. The remarkable feature here was the treatment of the elevation between the projecting drawing-room wing and the massive chimneybreast by the dining room (*Fig 2*).

On the lower-ground floor, overlooking an upper terrace, is an open loggia behind two segmental arches. Above are the two windows that light the hall on the main floor. These, most unusually for Lutyens, are Gothic and filled with elaborate tracery and they are set within two arches of almost Gothic

profile (*Fig 4*). Lutyens clearly thought hard about all this, for he sent his friend Sir Herbert Baker, then in South Africa, sketches of the evolving design, which show a thick, castle-like pier between these windows instead of the corbel that now supports the overhanging wall above.

Hussey thought Chinthurst Hill 'more ambitiously stylised than any he had attempted hitherto, suggesting a mediaeval manor house altered in Elizabethan times'. It is certainly one of the architect's most eclectic designs. As we shall see, its recently restored interiors are likewise full of brilliant invention and experiment. 🐉





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# One for sorrow, two for joy

Undeniably a creature of pied splendour, with its monochrome plumage and a diamond-shaped tail, the magpie is a dandy, but it's also a thuggish thief, says David Profumo

**A** SAUCY, swaggering pilferer, the common magpie has a reputation as a scallywag and a pest, and, for all its handsome appearance, is indisputably the piebald huckster of our avian world.

Widely distributed across Europe and Asia, *Pica pica*—like many of its names, the Latin one is partly onomatopoeic—is, nowadays, a common sight in open country, glades and urban parks. As an inveterate impaler of nestlings and songbird eggs, it was once virtually persecuted (the Irish sometimes claim theirs were deliberately reintroduced from England in Cromwellian times), but, in the past few decades, magpie numbers have burgeoned and the British population is reckoned at more than 600,000.

In spring, they sometimes form sizeable ceremonial gatherings—Darwin dubbed them ‘marriage’ meetings, but their true function remains mysterious. One of the bird’s many collective nouns is a tiding, which reflects the folk belief that it is a bearer of news.

The nanpie, pynot or Cornish pheasant was originally just a pye, meaning a mixture of colours (pie, our cooked dish, shares the same stem). With its glossy black head and mantle and wings that display blue

and white, it is undeniably a creature of pied splendour, especially when in flight and showing the bottle-green lustre of its diamond-shaped tail. On the ground—where the bird is capable of an impressive, bounding gait—the tail is carefully uplifted, to preserve its immaculacy.

Like many thugs, the magpie is a dandy. It was also once a derisive term for Anglican prelates, based on their vestments and their selective ‘magpiety’. It’s no black-and-white minstrel, however. The raucous, clicking voice has given rise to many sobriquets associated with chattering—that ‘mag’ prefix is a diminutive form of Margaret (nickname for a gossipy female) and legend has it the pie so aggravated Noah that he banished it to the roof of his Ark, from which it chattered as the world drowned. In Roman myth, it became a byword for Bacchanalian garrulity and the Italian *gazza* is said to give us ‘gazette’, a printed forum for gossip.

In captivity, it was once renowned as a mimic—Ovid alludes to ‘imitantes omnia picae’ and Pliny the Unreliable recommended first feeding it acorns. The Scots believed it would be endowed with human speech if the tongue was first cut with an old, unmilled sixpence.

This impudent marauder is an omnivore—slugs, snails, grain and

roadkill are all on the menu and, accordingly, it’s lent its name to pica, that human eating disorder typified by a craving for the most outlandish foodstuffs.

It’s also a notorious kleptomaniac, with a penchant for half-inching shiny artefacts. This trait is central to the plot of Rossini’s 1817 melodrama *La Gazza Ladra* (in which the bird’s theft of a silver spoon almost results in Ninetta’s execution) as well as Tintin’s adventure *The Castafiore Emerald*, wherein Captain Haddock is rumoured to be enamoured of the operatic diva. *The Thieving Magpie* was adopted as the title of a 1988 live album by cultish prog-rock band Marillion. The magpie is a brainy bird, one of the few animals capable of recognising its own image in laboratory mirror-tests.

Nest building generally begins here in late March. The maggot-pie is said to pair for life (one reason a solitary sighting is considered a cause for sorrow), but, when bereaved, it shows an enviable alacrity in re-mating. The nest is an impressive, canopied construction incorporating thorny twigs and





Formulae for averting the bird's malign influence include muttering "Satan, I defy thee" and spitting thrice over your shoulder 9

a discreet side entrance—as impregnable as the fastness of any robber baron. Alchemists believed the bird employed a magical herb (possibly springwort) to reopen its nest. A single clutch—typically five pale-green, mottled eggs—is laid around April.

As befits a creature of visible contrasts, attitudes to the magpie are historically ambivalent. In the Orient, it was prized as a sign of fertility and domestic bliss, admired for its *yin-and-yang* plumage (it was the official 'bird of joy' for the Manchu dynasty). It is welcome around Norwegian homesteads and, over in France, around Poitou, there was even a pye-worshipping cult. But here—undoubtedly due to pagan precedents—it is proverbially a bird of ill omen, the harbinger of unwelcome strangers and disease, tainted with diabolical blood.

### How do you salute magpies?

Acknowledging and hailing magpies is a long-held country superstition. In order to ward off bad luck, I was taught, a very long time ago, to greet the sight of a lone *Pica pica* with the words: 'Good morning, Mr Magpie, how are Mrs Magpie and all the other little magpies?'


A single magpie has been regarded as a portent of doom since time immemorial—possibly stemming from the suggestion that the magpie was the only bird not to sing to Jesus

as he died on the cross, which gave it a reputation for meanness.

Whatever the reason, many of us perform differing rituals and routines in the presence of a single magpie. Some raise their hats, some salute in military fashion, others cross themselves and some believe that seeing a crow immediately after a magpie will cancel out the unfortunate effects of seeing one of these chattering birds.

Arguably, no other form of ancient bird lore is recited on such a regular basis as the old rhyme relating to seeing lots of magpies together (collective nouns include a mischief),

There are multiple variations of the ditty about counting them. In Somerset, they warbled: 'dree, zign o' weddin-day/Vower, zign o' death'; non-nursery versions include 'seven for a bitch, eight for a whore'. Formulae for averting the bird's malign influence involve doffing your hat, muttering 'Satan, I defy thee' and spitting thrice over your shoulder—which could be messy in a March gale.

Although edible, this corvid is no delicacy. However, its flesh is held to have medicinal properties: in Dresden, magpie broth cured epilepsy, although, in the Tyrol, it brought on madness. The Swiss swore it healed corns, if you chanted: 'Aigi zigi, Aegest, i ha dreu Auga, ond Du gad zwa, ha, ha.' Pass the broth, Heidi dear. 

which many believe goes:

One for sorrow,  
Two for joy,  
Three for a girl,  
Four for a boy,  
Five for silver  
Six for gold

Seven for a secret left untold.

However, there are several regional variations of this little ditty, such as: *I saw eight magpies in a tree, Two for you and six for me. One for sorrow, two for mirth, Three for a wedding, four for a birth. Five for England, six for France, Seven for a fiddler, eight for a dance.* PL



Classic cuppa

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**A**S all good Britons know, the answer to most, if not all, of life's woes is a cup of tea—the mighty cuppa was eulogised as 'one of the mainstays of civilisation in this country' by the writer George Orwell. Some take enough sugar to rival a tin of treacle, others like a dash of milk or a slice of lemon and there are those who prefer their beverage in its unadulterated form. But there is, according to those in the know, a precise science behind achieving the best brew.

The most important ingredient is, of course, the tea leaves—opt for the highest quality possible. Never leave tea out, as it absorbs moisture and odours, but it will keep in an airtight container for a year.

Second on the list of priorities is water. 'Always start with freshly drawn, cold water, never re-boil the kettle as this deoxygenates the water—making the tea dull and lacking in flavour—and use a carbon-based filter if you live in a hard-water area,' advises Philippa Thacker, master blender at Twinings of London ([www.twinings.com](http://www.twinings.com)). 'This will ensure your tea looks nice and bright, retaining its lively taste. It will also prevent a film forming on the surface.'

Water temperature is key. 'Too hot and the delicate leaf will turn bitter,' warns Henrietta Lovell,

founder of the Rare Tea Company ([www.rareteacompany.com](http://www.rareteacompany.com); 020-7681 0115), who also selects the varieties served at Claridge's afternoon tea (London W1, 020-7629 8860; [www.claridges.co.uk](http://www.claridges.co.uk)). 'The softer, sweeter flavours come from amino acids with lower dissolving points.' English leaf teas are best brewed at between 80°C and 95°C—or slightly higher if adding milk—but more delicate white and green teas prefer 70°C and herbal infusions can go up to 100°C.

Temperature-controlled kettles are readily available, but Miss Lovell suggests a little cold water in the pot as an alternative. 'Don't forget: good leaf tea can be infused at least twice to reveal different nuances of flavour,' she continues. 'The trick is not to let the leaf sit in water between infusions.' Anyone using a tea bag, which lacks subtlety of flavour, should


bring their kettle to the boil to avoid a cup of insipid dishwater.

When it comes to quantity, Miss Thacker suggests one teaspoon of leaves per person, plus one 'for the pot' for a stronger brew. Steeping times vary. Delicate blends only need 1–3 minutes in the pot, oolong takes a mere 30 seconds to infuse and black varies from about a minute to up to three if milk and sugar are to be added. Once your tea has infused to the preferred strength, simply transfer into a second, warmed pot for serving.

For those who take milk, the order of assembly is a contentious one. Some believe that, in polite society, milk is poured first, but with modern china, this shouldn't be necessary—the practice originated to prevent the heat of the tea cracking the cups.

Orwell argued for quite the opposite in his 1946 essay *A nice*

*cup of tea* for the *Evening Standard*: 'By putting the tea in first and stirring as one pours, one can exactly regulate the amount.' The writer was vehemently against the addition of sugar: 'How can you call yourself a true tealover if you destroy the flavour...? It would be equally reasonable to put in pepper or salt.' However, as he also queried why it should be considered vulgar to drink out of your saucer, it's probably safe to ignore his advice in this instance, should you so choose.

In fact, the final step in making the perfect cup of tea is probably to ignore most of the above. After all, no one else knows how to make your tea quite how you like it—with the exception, perhaps, of mother. 

### Barny for a brew

We consume 165 million cups of tea a day in the UK—that's more than 60.2 billion a year—according to a study commissioned by milk brand Cravendale

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**Tea drinking started in about 600BC, when it was taken in China as a medicinal beverage**

## Even more tea, vicar?

Some take no sugar, others take three, but how, precisely, asks Victoria Marston, does one make the perfect cup of tea?



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# Hot new potatoes

As gardeners start to plant the first earlies,  
Angela Clutton unearths the tastiest  
and most distinctive regional varieties of new potatoes

**T**HE new season is starting to beckon in an enticing way for gardeners and cooks. Those indulging in thoughts of the flavours and colours to come can make them more tangible by using this first part of the spring to plant a crop of early potatoes. These 'new' potatoes receive justified fanfare when they arrive in shops and markets in early summer, and it's even more exciting when the homegrown first earlies—and second earlies, which are ready not long after—produce potato flowers that flag up the promise of delicious potatoes below.

There are marked differences between the size, flavour, texture and colour of earlies depending on the variety. Where and how they are grown is key, as demonstrated by a taste test of three different varieties all grown within Northern Ireland's Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status region of Comber. The producers farming Comber earlies in this small area share the same relatively dry and warm soil and mild climate. Their earlies have an earthy, sweet, nutty flavour and soft skin, yet even within that small area, different varieties all possess discernible idiosyncrasies of flavour and colour.

Home Guard, one of the prime Comber early crops, gained its sobriquet thanks to the volunteers who promoted its use when it was introduced during the Second World War. Its consistently high and early yield made it a useful crop and it's still a good choice now. With pure-white flowers, skin and flesh, it's a beauty of a potato that's perfect for those who are keen to get their earlies as early as possible. Once harvested, Home Guard is best enjoyed simply steamed and served with butter so its flavour can ring out.

Another heritage variety worth looking out for is British Queen. It also has wartime roots, having been part of the staple diet through both World Wars. This one is a second early with a slightly floury texture, which makes it more suited to a variety of cooking methods than some others and


its RHS Award of Garden Merit is testament to the breeding skill of Archibald Findlay in Fife in the late 1800s.

On the opposite coast of Scotland, Epicures that are adept at withstanding frost are particularly popular, many of which arrive before the Ayrshire earlies. Chilly mornings aside, there is much to commend the climate for growing earlies. The sandy soil and salty air, plus the warm Gulf Stream waters, play their part in creating potatoes of excellent texture and taste.

As Dorothy Hartley wrote in her 1950s book *Food In England*, new potatoes 'grow well in the sandy soil of seaside bungalows'. The balmy influence of the Gulf Stream is the potato-grower's friend and a significant factor in why Pembrokeshire's earlies are so reknowned that they also enjoy PGI status. Here, Maris Peer earlies are a popular variety; they have a creamy yellow flesh that withstands cooking without disintegrating or losing flavour and their scented purple flowers make them a joy to grow.

Bringing similar brightness to the potato patch are Red Duke of Yorks, another RHS Award of Garden Merit plant. These first earlies generously extend their brilliance to the kitchen and the plate, too, as they are one of the few to flourish with a ruby skin that contrasts with the potato's yellow flesh.

However, for many of us, the good old Jersey Royal is still the classic summer new potato of choice. We should really call them International Kidneys, but over the years, they've become known as Jersey Royals and must be grown on the island to be allowed the name. It would, however, be interesting to grow them elsewhere to see how much of their distinctive flavour comes from the variety itself.

Whatever variety you choose, digging up those first new potatoes is truly one of the best times of the year in the garden. 

**Consider your soil and growing conditions before selecting an early potato variety**

‘Different varieties all possess idiosyncrasies of flavour and colour’







## Seven of the best new varieties

**Epicure** Known for its deep eyes, it's a good choice for colder parts of the UK

**Sharpe's Express** These pear-shaped heritage potatoes have been grown since about 1900

**Maris Peer** Small salad potatoes with a light, fresh flavour

**Red Duke of York** It was first found within a Dutch crop of Duke of York potatoes

### **British Queen**

Distinguished by white skin, white flesh and many eyes, this spud has an old-fashioned look about it

**Home Guard** It has beautiful white flowers and is best eaten early

### **International Kidney**

A Jersey Royal variety that's excellent for salads

## Know your spuds

● In Cheshire, yellow wag-tails are known as 'potato droppers' by growers, who believe early potatoes shouldn't be planted until the birds have returned

● Some growers of earlies gauge their planting by the first shout of the cuckoo

● Sharpe's Express was TV gardener Percy Thrower's favourite first early

## Where to buy seed potatoes

Thompson & Morgan  
(0844 573 1818; [www.thompson-morgan.com](http://www.thompson-morgan.com))

JBA Seed Potatoes  
(01461 202567; [www.jbaseedpotatoes.co.uk](http://www.jbaseedpotatoes.co.uk))

Suttons Seeds  
(0333 400 2899; [www.suttons.co.uk](http://www.suttons.co.uk))

Carroll's Heritage Potatoes  
(01890 883060; [www.heritage-potatoes.co.uk](http://www.heritage-potatoes.co.uk))

Local potato seed fairs are also a good place to find interesting varieties



## Pieces of eight



↑ **Hen jug**, £23.99, Joanna Wood (020-7730 5064; [www.joannawood.co.uk](http://www.joannawood.co.uk))

→ **Chocolatier's Egg 2015**, £80, Bettys (0800 456 1919; [www.bettys.co.uk](http://www.bettys.co.uk))



↑ **Spring Celebration loose-leaf green tea**, £9.95, Harrods (020-3626 7020; [www.harrods.com](http://www.harrods.com))



→ **Solid-silver hare cufflinks**, £230, Cordings (020-7758 4122; [www.cordings.co.uk](http://www.cordings.co.uk))



↓ **Chicken weekend Stamford bag**, £48, Sophie Allport (0845 017 7866; [www.sophieallport.com](http://www.sophieallport.com))



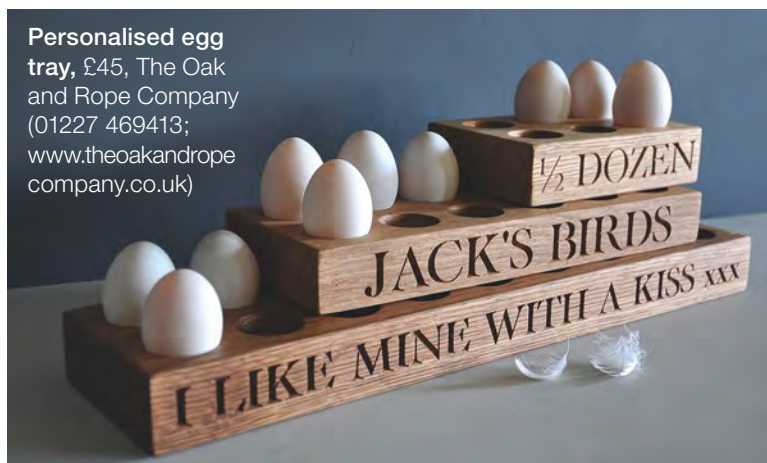
## A good egg (and other presents)

Indulge in more than just chocolate with Katy Birchall's pick of Easter treats

↓ **Jumping hare tie**, £75, Ray Ward (020-3283 8944; [www.rayward.co.uk](http://www.rayward.co.uk))



**Personalised egg tray**, £45, The Oak and Rope Company (01227 469413; [www.theoakandropecompany.co.uk](http://www.theoakandropecompany.co.uk))



→ **Chicken-leg egg cup and spoon** in Asprey hall-marked gilt and sterling silver, £550, Asprey (020-7493 6767; [www.asprey.com](http://www.asprey.com))





# Always look at the parent

Imported pests and diseases are rife among our trees, but there is a solution, says Barcham Trees

**W**ITH an explosion of foreign-tree imports in recent decades, the arboricultural industry is now reaping what it has sowed. Ash dieback, the oak processionary moth and the pine-moth caterpillar are just a few of the unwelcome visitors to the UK forcing Government importation bans and costing Defra a fortune to police. The oak processionary moth is a significant hazard to human health, causing severe respiratory disorder, and will cost authorities at least a six-figure sum to control in London alone this year.

But does it have to be that way? Not according to Barcham Trees, a tree nursery near Ely, Cambridgeshire, which grows more than 200,000 trees on its 300-acre site. It supplies 'instant-impact' containerised trees and is the



Collecting seed: this is the perfect 700-year-old parent for healthy and pest-free oak trees

## 'British-grown trees will naturally be best suited to thrive in this country'

largest nursery of its type in Europe. Mike Glover, managing director, explains that the company collects seed from veteran trees across the UK each autumn: 'I have a simple rule when choosing seed—always look at the parent. One of my favourites is a superb English oak in Northamptonshire. If it looks this good after 700 years, then it has to be a good bet!'

Whether it's English oak from Northamptonshire and Windsor, holm oak from Norfolk, sycamore and beech from Gloucestershire, birch from Wales or alder from Scotland, Mr Glover believes there should be an emphasis on homegrown trees. 'British trees are best suited to thrive in this country and, by growing trees in this way, the threat of pests and diseases entering the country is negated,' he enthuses.

But trees are a long-term business and there is always demand for a greater diversity than our native range. Significantly, the subject of tree importation and the protection of woodland became a topic of discussion in the House of Lords earlier this year. Barcham Trees was

singled out for trying to tackle these problems by introducing its own quarantine system for all imported trees.

'We don't import trees and sell to customers for immediate planting—instead, we hold all imported trees on the nursery for at least one full growing season. During this time, they are monitored by professionals and outside agencies such as Defra,' Mr Glover elaborates.

It may not always be practical to look at the parent, but knowing where our trees have come from means we can enjoy a full range of beautiful specimens without unintended and potentially disastrous consequences.



Barcham Trees prepares specially selected acorns that are then grown in Cambridgeshire fields for seven years

**Ready to go: one of Barcham Trees' 'instant-impact' containerised oaks**

*For instant-impact garden or screening trees, telephone 01353 720950 or visit [www.barcham.co.uk](http://www.barcham.co.uk)*





**K**ING'S COLLEGE LONDON (KCL) is a distinguished educational institution and yet its expansion plans always seem to come at a price, paid for in the irrevocable loss of old London. Proposals to erase a section of London's Borough High Street have already commenced on the site of old houses and alleyways, despite opposition (*COUNTRY LIFE*, September 11, 2013). Now, it has its sights on the destruction of a historic section of the Strand.

‘Adding new buildings has always been favoured over mending old ones as it's cheaper, easier and more prestigious for the egos of those involved’

Once again, we are told that redevelopment must take place to replace accommodation that is ‘unsuitable for a world class university’. The Strand is arguably the most significant thoroughfare in London, the ancient route that connects Westminster to the City of London. It's a street characterised by the survival of numerous narrow medieval plots that create an irregular jumble of gables and houses, a type of streetscape that—in the capital at least—increasingly seems to survive only in the imagination.

KCL has historically offended against the Strand once before. In 1966, the college erected a long (and frankly hideous) concrete entrance building. Like a giant and grotesquely over-scaled mouth organ, it leers towards the refined 18th-century church of St Mary Le Strand by James Gibbs (1714–8) that occupies an island site immediately opposite. This building fails to engage in any way with the street and presents a row of windows blinded by posters of past alumni to the passerby.

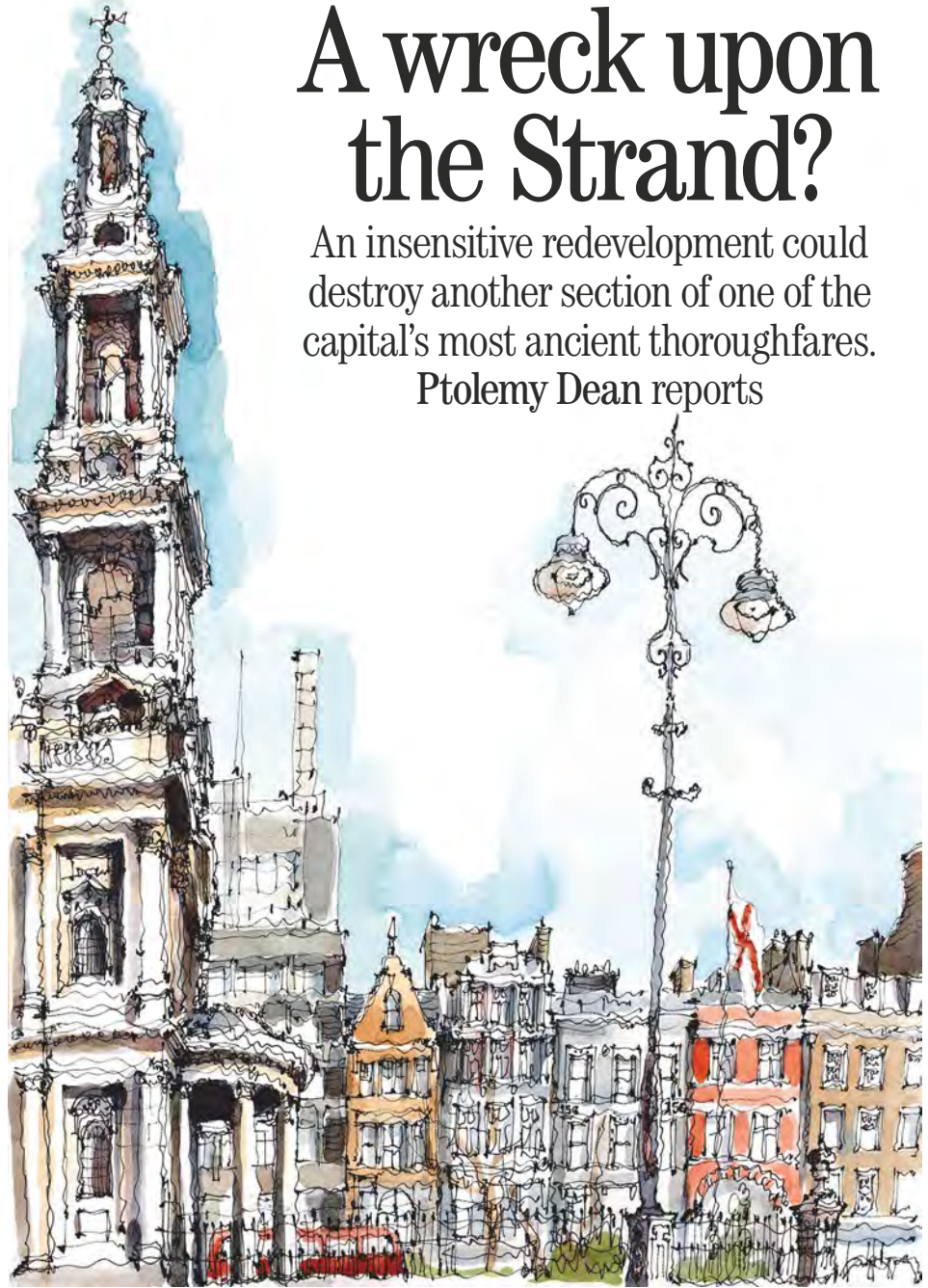
In the creation of this monstrosity, London's last two pre-Fire of London, 17th-century, timber-fronted houses and an original archway to KCL were all destroyed. Nevertheless, some sections of the old street, with its narrow houses, were allowed to survive on either side. The result is this remarkable glimpse of the James Gibbs church tower, attenuated and tall to command the long view down the Strand, with typical old London houses huddled at its base.

These are the houses that KCL now wants to remove, so that its existing 1966

# A wreck upon the Strand?

An insensitive redevelopment could destroy another section of one of the capital's most ancient thoroughfares.

Ptolemy Dean reports



King's College London wants to demolish historic buildings opposite Gibbs's St Mary le Strand

building (just visible behind the church portico) can be extended. The old houses once accommodated the Law Faculty, but, as only two of the houses are listed, the rest are now proposed for demolition. Yet if two houses could be saved, then surely all six could be and rebuilt behind their frontages if necessary? But this is not what KCL wants to do, to the detriment of the street and its history.

Although the whole group of buildings is contained within a conservation area, this seemingly counts for little when the planning consultants get going on quantifying ‘historic significance’. And yet it is the scale, variety and colour of the unlisted buildings that give the listed buildings their

context. As a group, these buildings also allow the brilliance of Gibbs to be expressed in a way that a larger and uniform institutional building will stifle.

It is ironic that the legislation that originally created conservation areas was enacted in 1967, a year after the KCL building was completed, and precisely to protect areas such as this. The increasing inability to defend conservation areas as a planning tool is becoming alarming nationwide. Adding new buildings has always been favoured over mending old ones as it's cheaper, easier and more prestigious for the egos of those involved. But if I were an alumnus of KCL, I wouldn't want my money to be spent smashing down old London. 🐉





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# Won't you buy me a Mercedes-Benz?

After a pleurably effortless drive to a christening, Simon de Burton finds himself wishing he owned Mercedes-Benz's latest 4x4



**E** SSE quam videri'—to be rather than to seem—was the family motto of the American tycoon Henry Graves Jr. I know this because I like watches and Graves had these words engraved (or should that be 'en-Graves-ed'?) on the case of his Patek Philippe pocket watch, which made news last year when it sold at auction for £15 million.

As someone who writes about expensive cars, I often find Graves's motto in my head when I'm driving about in something that the de Burtons clearly couldn't afford and which—in most cases—would be utterly preposterous for us to own.

Thankfully, we no longer have to explain that the Porsche 911/Bentley Mulsanne/Aston Martin Vanquish doesn't belong to us, but that we're simply evaluating its suitability for school runs, spaniel transportation and occasional hen collection. The other parents know by now that our fleet comprises an 18-year-old estate car, an 11-year-old hatchback and an almost modern Land Rover. Mostly, these serve us well, but occasions do arise when their array

**‘By the time we were three miles up the road, the godmother was purring’**

of talents fail to fit the bill. And by occasions, I mean times when we have to drive outside of the 20-mile radius of our daily orbit.

As a result, when we were recently faced with the prospect of a 220-mile drive to a christening at which Mrs de Burton was required as godmother, we praised the Lord when Mercedes-Benz offered me a test drive in one of its latest ML250 SUVs that weekend.

Its miraculous arrival meant that we would emerge from the Artico black-leather interior looking presentable and that, even if it were to snow, the sophisticated four-wheel-drive system (complete with high and low ratios) would get us to the church on time.

Unfortunately, as it sat in the yard having salt licked from its

gargantuan tyres by a ewe, the godmother-to-be expressed her misgivings. 'That car is so not us. It's a Chelsea tractor.' And, looking at its immaculate paint, privacy glass and 20in-diameter wheels, I was inclined to agree.

Opinions quickly changed, however, once we settled into the seats (heated and fully electric), tuned in to *Today* on the high-watt sound system and adjusted the climate control to our individual requirements. By the time we were three miles up the road, the godmother was positively purring.

But most surprising was the discovery that, despite the ML's vast dimensions and luxurious appointments, it was covering an honest 40 miles on every gallon of fuel—and can, according to the book, achieve close to 50. Its parsimony is down to the fact that the six- or eight-cylinder engines usually associated with the model have been substituted for a four-cylinder, 2.2 diesel unit, which is both economical and relatively environmentally friendly thanks to the use of the BlueTEC emission-reduction system.

## On the road

**Mercedes-Benz ML250 BlueTEC 4Matic**

**Price** £48,190

**Annual road fund licence** £180

**Combined fuel consumption** 45.6mpg

**Power** 204bhp

**0–62mph** 9 seconds

In short, the journey was a delight, an effortless pleasure. But there was a problem—the christening was taking place in the chapel of one of the stateliest of England's country houses, the incumbents of which do not drive around in spotless SUVs, but in faithful old bangers patinated with ancestral mud.

After the business around the font was done, we drove to the house for refreshments, a journey in which 'our' gleaming new ML stuck out like a sore thumb. Cringing, we parked in the shadow of the architecturally significant portico. 'I am seeming, not being,' I longed to shout. 'This is not our car.' Although we secretly wished it were. 🐑



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**A**LTHOUGH spinach is believed to have originated in Persia, it didn't become widely used until the 7th century, when the king of Nepal sent some as a gift to China. After the Moors introduced it to Spain in the 11th century, spinach became known as the 'Spanish' vegetable as more and more people throughout Europe began to eat it. It was later popularised in the 16th century in France by Italian noblewoman Catherine de' Medici, who went on to marry the French king, Henry II, and preferred her chefs to prepare dishes with spinach *à la Florentine*.

## More ways with spinach

### **Korean spinach salad with sesame dressing (below)**

Wilt 200g of spinach by placing it in a colander and pouring boiling water on it. Leave it to drain and then pile the spinach in the centre of a plate. For the dressing, lightly toast 50g sesame seeds in a frying pan, then blitz in a food processor with 2tbspn soy sauce, 2tbspn rice vinegar and 1tbspn sugar to form a paste to drizzle over the spinach. Scatter a few extra toasted sesame seeds on top.



### **Deep-filled spinach frittata**

Fry a sliced red onion in a little olive oil in a large, ovenproof frying pan. Add a chopped red pepper, chopped courgette, seasoning, 1tbspn pesto and about 10 cooked and sliced new potatoes, then fry until cooked and heated through, before adding a handful of garden peas and two handfuls of fresh spinach. Beat 8 eggs in a bowl and pour into the pan over the vegetables. Stir everything together, then allow the eggs to set, like an omelette, and cook for about 10 minutes. Scatter grated cheese over the top and pop the *frittata* under the grill until it's cooked through and the cheese has melted. Serve with salad leaves and crusty rolls.

Melanie Johnson

**“**My homegrown spinach becomes very gritty, even after a thorough wash, unless I pick it while the leaves are still small and young. I think it tastes better then, too, so my advice is to harvest early and keep replanting for an ongoing supply of these vitamin-rich, dark-green leaves throughout the summer **”**



## **Spinach, lemon and Parmesan pearl-barley risotto**

### **Serves 4**

#### **Ingredients**

20ml olive oil  
1 onion, diced  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
300g pearl barley  
200ml white wine  
1 litre chicken stock  
250g fresh baby spinach, washed  
Juice and zest of 1 lemon  
100g Parmesan, grated  
2tbsp crème fraîche  
Handful fresh basil leaves, chopped

#### **Method**

Heat the olive oil in a heavy-based pan and fry the diced onion until translucent rather than browned, then add the crushed garlic and pearl barley and stir well until every grain is coated with olive oil. Pour in the white wine—it will sizzle, but keep stirring until it's fully absorbed—then add the chicken stock, in one go, and bring to a gentle boil before lowering the temperature. Simmer for about 30 minutes or until the barley is tender, remembering to add the spinach just before all the liquid has been absorbed.

Once cooked, squeeze the lemon juice over it, add the crème fraîche, fresh basil, grated Parmesan and mix all the ingredients through well, before topping the risotto off with a scattering of lemon zest and more Parmesan. Serve for lunch with fresh rolls and salad or as a dinner-party starter. 🐸



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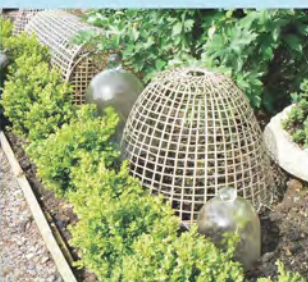


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# Every little bit helps

Five years from its inception, The Prince's Countryside Fund is providing invaluable assistance to rural communities, support networks and start-up businesses, as Ellie Hughes reports



**I**N July 2013, gamekeeper David Nesfield was sawing down a branch in the grounds of Burton Agnes Hall in East Yorkshire when he slipped, fell awkwardly and broke his back in three places in an accident that left him paralysed from the waist down. 'I was just damned unlucky,' says Mr Nesfield, who was 57 at the time and had been head gamekeeper on the estate for 10 years. 'Ninety-nine times out of 100, the same fall would have had a different outcome.'

Fortunately, however, during his five-month stay in hospital, a friend put Mr Nesfield in touch with the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust

**‘In 2013 and 2014, more than £1.1 million was distributed across the UK for farming apprenticeships, business mentoring, community projects and flood relief ,**

**The Prince of Wales visits Britain's largest organic pig farm, Bunkers Hill in King's Lynn, Norfolk: his charity, The Prince's Countryside Fund, was established to support our rural economy and workers**

(GWT)—an organisation that provides assistance to gamekeepers in times of hardship or ill-health. 'I had two choices—I could sit around being miserable or accept my condition and make the best of it,' he says matter-of-factly.

Mr Nesfield chose the latter and the GWT supported him by helping to finance a specially adapted Gator all-terrain vehicle that he could operate unaided. 'I was soon back to work, belting round the estate like a madman,' confesses Mr Nesfield, adding that he's indebted to the trust for its support and to his employer, ➤  
(Continued on page 106)





## Dishing up a lucrative deal

**I**n line with The Prince of Wales's commitment to the rural community and his understanding of the most pressing issues country people face, tackling low farming incomes and supporting rural communities is an integral part of the PCF's work.

With this in mind, the Herdwick sheep project was established in 2013 in a bid to promote the unique characteristics of the meat and to try to set up high-profile supply contracts between farmers, restaurants, pubs and shops.

'We need to support the fragile network of specialist Herdwick farmers and shepherds,' urges project

**‘Chefs such as Marcus Wareing and Brett Graham are singing the praises of Herdwick lamb,’**

manager Mary Houston. 'The meat should be on the shelves of quality butchers and retailers and on the menu of all reputable restaurants. It's a seasonal product in limited supply, so contracts need to be lucrative to ensure maximum returns for farmers.'

And it's working, as chefs such as Marcus Wareing and Brett Graham

**A farmer with his ewes at Cockermouth market in Cumbria for the annual Herdwick sheep show and sale: the fund is helping to raise the profile of Herdwick lamb with restaurants, pubs and shops**

are singing the praises of Herdwick lamb and dishing it up in their London restaurants.

'Too many marketing projects nibble around the edges of a problem, but this one is tackling the core issues—increasing awareness of our product and forging better networks—and this means farmers are supporting it,' explains Will Rawling, an eighth-generation Herdwick farmer and chairman of the Herdwick Sheep Breeders' Association. 'We're a close-knit community, which is probably why the project has had such positive momentum.'

For Mr Rawling, securing the future for the next generation is vital: 'In 20 years' time, I would like every visitor to the Lakeland area to know about Herdwick lamb and mutton and have the opportunity to eat them.'





Simon Cunliffe-Lister, who kept his job open and modified the cottage where he lives on the estate with his wife, Sally, to enable easy wheelchair access. 'Of course, I can't do a lot of the manual tasks I once did, but I can still be involved,' he adds.

The GWT is one of many beneficiaries of The Prince's Countryside Fund (PCF), which was set up in 2010 to help secure a sustainable future for agriculture and the rural economy—and look after those such as Mr Nesfield, who have devoted their lives to working in the countryside.

In 2013 and 2014, more than £1.1million was distributed across

**The Game-keepers' Welfare Trust, a beneficiary of the PCF, helped game-keeper David Nesfield get back to work after he fell and broke his back, paralyzing him from the waist down**

the UK to 23 companies, 28 projects and more than 1,000 farmers, to meet a wide range of needs and challenges from farming apprenticeships and business mentoring to community projects and emergency flood relief, which was so welcomed by residents of the Somerset Levels last year.

*The Prince's Countryside Fund ([www.princescountrysidefund.org.uk](http://www.princescountrysidefund.org.uk)) is hoping to raise funds to help more rural people through its inaugural raceday at Ascot—for which COUNTRY LIFE is the official media partner—on Sunday, March 29 (0844 346 3000; [www.ascot.co.uk](http://www.ascot.co.uk))*

## Reinvigorating life on Raasay

Sandwiched between the Scottish mainland and the Isle of Skye, the remote island of Raasay has a population of 150 permanent residents that's boosted by walkers in the summer. When the elderly owner of the island's only shop wanted to sell up and retire two years ago, residents were left with the prospect of having to make the hour-long trip (including a half-hour ferry journey) to Skye to buy basic provisions. However, thanks to funding from the PCF, the newly formed Community of Raasay Retail Association (CORRA) managed to buy the shop and turn it into a multi-purpose convenience store, cafe and information centre.

'Raasay has an elderly population that relies on being able to pop to the shop for a pint of milk or a loaf of bread,' says Tekela Koek, who manages both CORRA and the shop and has lived on the island for 30 years. 'Many people would have left had we not been able to keep it running and the tourist trade would have suffered dreadfully.'

The shop has benefited the community in other ways, too. 'Although CORRA relies on volunteers, manning the counter is paid work, which has provided some of the locals with employment,' adds Mrs Koek.

## Sail away, in a Land Rover

For the volunteer members of the Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA), squeezing into the back of a vehicle fully laden with specialist equipment has long been a hazard of the job, but all that changed last year, when the association was given a Land Rover courtesy of the PCF.

SARA, which responds to all manner of emergencies in the Severn Estuary catchment area—from sinking vessels and stranded dogs to missing people and climbing accidents—was one of the recipients of the PCF Land Rover bursary, an initiative that awards five people or community groups the loan of a new vehicle for a year.

'It's been invaluable this winter,' says Mervyn Fleming, SARA's Western Region Commander. 'Although



**'It's been invaluable,' says Mervyn Fleming of the vehicle loaned to the Severn Area Rescue Association**

**'The crew used to have to make their way up the mountain in separate vehicles ,**

the weather has been kind to us and we've not had terrible flooding like in 2012 and 2013, it's covered more than 2,500 miles in three months.'

According to Mr Fleming, the Land Rover 'came into its own' during winter training sessions in the mountains. 'The crew used to have to make their way up the mountain in separate vehicles. Now, we can take one vehicle with the kit and the crew can travel in comfort in the Land Rover. It makes it a far more cost-effective, timely and slick operation.'



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## Visual treasures

A common toad  
with toadspawn  
and frogspawn

Photograph by Linda Pitkin

Common toads are readily distinguished from frogs by their shorter legs—which enable them to crawl rather than hop—broad, squat bodies, warty skin and yellow/golden-brown eyes with a horizontal split pupil. Tending to live away from water, apart from when they emerge from hibernation to mate in February and March, many common toads are killed as they attempt to cross busy roads en route to their breeding ponds.

During mating, the male clutches the much larger female in a tight embrace called an amplexus and will emit a loud release call if he's grasped by another male. *Bufo bufo* lays its eggs later than common frogs and in a rope-like string that resembles a necklace of black pearls encased in jelly, as opposed to the clumps of frog spawn that can be seen behind the toad in this picture.

On closer inspection, these strands of spawn cleverly comprise a double row of eggs that are laid among the waterweeds and metamorphose into toadlets in June and July.

Existing on a diet of insect larvae, spiders, slugs and worms—sometimes, larger toads may eat slow worms, small grass snakes and harvest mice—common toads, which ward off predators by secreting an irritant substance from their skin and puffing themselves up, can live for up to 40 years

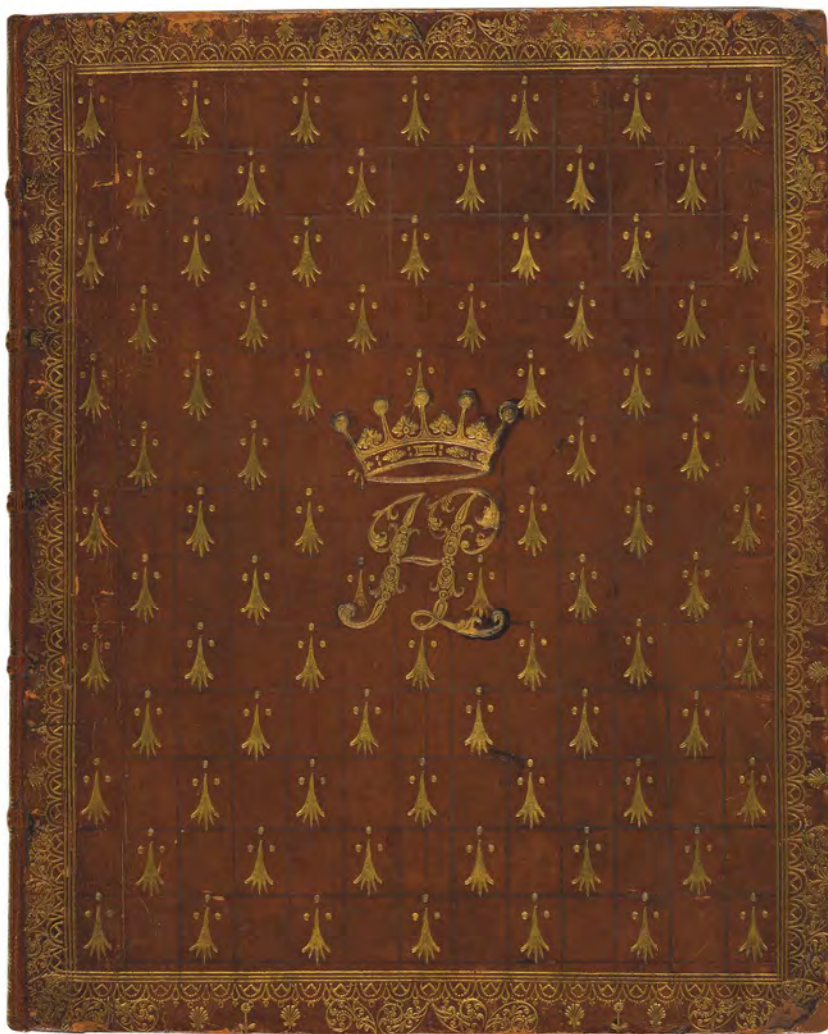
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# A passion for Gothic

The pedigree created for Walpole's 'rival', the Countess of Pomfret, is a remarkable example of her knowledge of medieval matters, as Peter Lindfield explains

**H**ENRIETTA LOUISA FERMOR (1698–1761), Countess of Pomfret, is an extraordinary figure in the history of Georgian taste. A pre-occupation with the medieval world, particularly in the second half of her life, generated a group of objects remarkable for their jewel-like appearance and decorative ambition. The Countess, lady of the bedchamber to Queen Caroline, was of the generation preceding the most famous 18th-century Gothicism, Horace Walpole (1717–97). Walpole created his 'little Gothic castle', Strawberry Hill, between 1747 and 1777 and wrote what is considered to be the first Gothic Novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Despite their difference in age, Walpole met the Countess while on the Grand Tour. They each had a house on Arlington Street in London and their shared regard for medieval architecture emerges in personal correspondence.

Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Writing about Dover Castle, for example, the Countess's antiquarianism is discernible: 'When one looks on this noble ruin & reflects on St James's, Kensington etc. we may tell ourselves without having recourse to History that the Plantagenets are extinct & even the Tudors live but in a Story.' Walpole, reflecting upon the Temple of Liberty at Stowe, Buckinghamshire, is likewise positive about a style typically considered by his contemporaries as inferior to Classicism: 'In the heretical corner of my heart I adore the Gothic building, which by some unusual inspiration Gibbs has made pure and beautiful and venerable.'

Although their shared interest was unusual in the mid 18th century, Walpole was—predictably—vituperative about the Countess. When she donated her late husband's collection of Classical sculpture to the University of Oxford in 1755—which forms part of the Arundel

Marbles—Walpole ridiculed the Countess: 'Her dress had all the tawdry poverty and frippery, with which you remember her, and I dare swear her tympany, scarce covered with ticking, produced itself through the slit of her scoured damask robe.' He was equally unkind about her emphasis on intellectual prowess and accused her of self-aggrandisement.

Nevertheless, the Countess's Gothic works are important milestones in the early Georgian Gothic Revival. The largest and most significant, undertaken during her widowhood, is the erection and furnishing of 18, Arlington Street, otherwise styled Pomfret Castle, between 1757 and 1761. Whereas Walpole's Strawberry Hill is located in Twickenham, the Countess's Gothic town house was the only mid-18th-century building of its kind in the heart of Georgian London. Sadly, it was demolished in 1934, after having been recorded by COUNTRY LIFE.





The Countess of Pomfret's bound and illuminated pedigree, of about 1750, was created in the style of a medieval manuscript. It illustrates the lineage of the Countess and her husband, both of whom were descended from Edward I through his first and second wives

A number of the Countess's other Gothic works do, however, survive intact. Recent research has revealed that two such objects, which are extraordinarily flamboyant and outlandish, pre-date Pomfret Castle. The first is a polychromed cabinet based on William Kent's Gothic Revival woodwork at York Minster. The cabinet was produced almost certainly in London by a leading cabinet-maker, William Hallett Sr, for the Earl and Countess of Pomfret's country seat, Easton Neston, Northamptonshire, in about 1752–53.

Even more remarkable, however, is her pedigree, which is lavishly bound and illuminated in imitation of a medieval manuscript. The front board, tooled with her monogram and coronet, is covered with ermine patterning taken from the Countess's arms and suggests its importance.

The pedigree illustrates her and her husband's descent from Edward I through his first and second wives. The frontispiece declares this lineage by depicting Edward I enthroned, taken from his great seal, and under a fictive Gothic arch. To the right are the arms of his first wife quartered with Edward's three lions, to represent his first marriage to Eleanor

‘Instead of a vulgar genealogical tree, she has devised a pineapple plant,’

of Castile, and to the left are those of his second wife, Margaret of France, similarly quartered. Next, set within a bold and polychromed architectural border, the genealogy begins by detailing Edward I's marriages.

On the reverse, a pineapple ‘tree’—or pomfret—surges from a wicker basket emblazoned with the great seal of Edward I. To the left is the seal of Eleanor and, to the right, should be the seal of Margaret (inaccurately substituted here by Joan of Navarre's). The message is clear; the authority and acts of Edward I nurture the Earl and Countess of Pomfret and their ancestors. The coats of arms ‘hanging’ on the pineapple, representing the Pomfrets' lineage, refer to their progenitors; directly above the basket are those of Edward I and Ralph de Monthermer.

With its unusual format and visual language, the pedigree proclaims both the Countess's interest in the Gothic and genealogy. According to Sir Horace Mann (1706–86), who was part of Walpole's circle, she ‘told people here that her own family was above 3,000 years old’. The manuscript clearly fails on this point. Even so, it links the Countess to a successful king. Perhaps the choice of Edward I as the first ancestral figure in the genealogy is connected to the proximity of the Eleanor Cross at Hardingstone to Easton Neston.

This remarkable manuscript also attracted Walpole's attention. In September 1750, he wrote: ‘I have seen one (a pedigree) infinitely richer and better done, it is for my Lady Pomfret—She and My Lord both descend from King Edward I by his two queens. The Pedigree is painted in a book: instead of a vulgar genealogical tree, she has devised a pineapple plant, sprouting out of a basket, on which is King Edward's head; on the leaves are all the intermediate arms.’ This is very high praise.

The Countess may be less well-known than Walpole as a Gothickist, but this genealogy reveals the depth and sophistication of her interest in the Middle Ages. 🐉





**T**RANSPORT, schools and value for money are gradually coaxing buyers from Fulham, Battersea and Wandsworth out of hibernation and into the garden of England, where the choice on all three counts is currently second to none, says William Peppitt of Savills in Cranbrook. 'Admittedly, the number of London-based buyers looking to take advantage of the value to be found in the Kent countryside is still more of a trickle than a tidal wave, but we have seen a significant increase in the number of those wanting houses in the critical £2 million to £3 million price bracket—an area that saw little or no activity last year. Most buyers now seem reasonably confident that, even if some form of "mansion tax" is brought in, a house valued at £3 million is unlikely to carry a tax liability of more than £3,000 a year [see page 114].'

'And although prime central London may be struggling a bit at the moment, south-west London is trading well, so families there who decide to move sooner rather than later should

## Time to get out in the garden

You'll be surprised what good value awaits the canny buyer among Kent's historic houses



**Fig 1 above: Idyllic Great Wadd Farmhouse at Cranbrook is set in 33½ acres. £2.6m**



**Fig 2: Timber-framed Old Cloth Hall is on the semi-rural outskirts of Cranbrook. £2.65m**



**Fig 3: The gardens at Weaver's Cot in Biddenden have been landscaped over 30 years. £1.195m**

be able to sell their houses and take advantage of the value for money to be found in Kent,' he adds.

Historic Cranbrook, Kent's smallest town, halfway between Maidstone and Hastings, was described by the author H. E. Bates as 'a village giving the impression of trying to remember what once made it important'. In medieval times, it was the thriving centre of the Wealden cloth industry; nowadays, however, the historic market town is probably best known to savvy London parents for having one of the best grammar schools in south-east England.

Savills in Cranbrook (01580 720161) quote a guide price of £2.6m for idyllic Great Wadd Farmhouse (**Fig 1**) at Frittenden, an enchanting, mainly 17th-century farmhouse set in 33½ acres of landscaped gardens, grounds, fields and woodland. Grade II-listed buildings include the impeccably refurbished main farmhouse with 18th-century additions and a substantial timber-framed tithe barn thought to date from the 16th century or earlier.

The 4,500sq ft main house has four principal reception rooms, a kitchen/breakfast room, master and guest suites, three bedrooms and two bath/

shower rooms. The tithe barn houses a heated indoor pool and a large first-floor studio and a traditional Kentish oast house provides four further bedrooms, two bath/shower rooms, an open-plan kitchen/sitting room and a dining room.

This week sees the launch, through the Cranbrook office of Jackson-Stops & Staff (01580 720000), of two splendid country houses, both situated within the coveted Cranbrook school-catchment area. The agents quote a guide price of £2.65m for Grade II\*-listed Old Cloth Hall (**Fig 2**), on the semi-rural outskirts of the town, an impressive timber-framed house that dates from the 15th century, when Cranbrook's broadcloth industry was at its peak.

The house has some 6,500sq ft of living space on three floors, including five reception rooms, a kitchen/breakfast room, a master bedroom suite, 4/5 further bedrooms and three bath/shower rooms. It stands in almost six acres of gardens, grounds and paddocks, within far-reaching views towards the town's picturesque





Union Windmill and beyond. Its leisure facilities are excellent and include a games room and gymnasium, a cinema room, a stable block with a tack room, a hay barn and an all-weather manège, and a heated outdoor swimming pool.

Another monument to Cranbrook's industrial glory days is Weavers Cot (**Fig 3**) at Biddenden, which dates from the early 1500s. Keenly priced at £1.195m, its Grade II\* listing underlines its historical and architectural importance, inside and out. It has 5,000sq ft of accommodation on two floors plus attics, with three spacious reception rooms, a study, a kitchen/breakfast room, a master suite, six further bedrooms and two family bathrooms.

Weaver's Cot's six acres of gardens and grounds have been landscaped over 30 years to provide colour and interest. Highlights include a wild-flower meadow with native orchids, a cob-nut walk and a bluebell wood. A fabulous kitchen garden is enclosed by a 'crinkle-crankle' wall built of handmade bricks.

Launched by Knight Frank (01732 744477) in the March 4 issue of *COUNTRY LIFE*, at a guide price of £2.2m, Grade II-listed Tanyard (**Fig 4**) stands in 8.7 acres of lovely gardens on the edge of Boughton Monchelsea village—three miles from Sutton Valence school and four miles from Staplehurst station.

The centre of the house was a tannery in the 14th century and the front a meeting hall in the 15th or 16th

## ‘Take advantage of the value in the Kent countryside ;

century, both later combined to form one house. In the late 1800s, the property, then part of the Warburg estate, was planted with orchards and the house split into farm cottages.

Tanyard was renovated in the 1980s, with a substantial extension added in recent years. The main house, which comes with a two-bedroom cottage and glorious southerly views, has some 4,500sq ft of accommodation, including three reception rooms, a snug, a kitchen/breakfast room and five bedroom suites.

Now that the advent of high-speed rail has finally brought east Kent commuters in from the cold, the value for money to be found here has rarely looked better. Simon Backhouse of Strutt & Parker's Canterbury office (01227 451123) is selling two houses of note in his area, both within easy driving distance of Canterbury station or Ashford International.

Grade II-listed Cobham Court (**Fig 5**) at Bokesbourne, four miles from Canterbury, is a large family house, originally built in about 1480 and altered and extended many times since. For sale at a guide price of £2.75m, it was once part of a large farming estate that was gradually sold off over the years, leaving only

its present five acres of magnificent gardens, originally laid out in 1344.

According to its listing, it was the court house of the manor where proceedings were overseen by the Deputy Mayor of Hastings. In fact, the property comprises two houses: the five-bedroom Cobham Court and Cobham Court Lodge, a modern barn conversion built by the present owners for their own use, but which they have also now decided to sell.

A guide price of £1.45m is quoted for the handsome Victorian Worth Court (**Fig 6**) at Worth, near Sandwich, which is unlisted and has five reception rooms, six bedrooms, four bathrooms, and 5.4 acres of gardens, including an intriguing Coronation Garden laid out in the early 1950s by the former mayor of Sandwich, Frank Rose. Thereafter, visiting dignitaries were always invited to plant a tree and those who did represent a roll-call of ‘the great and the good’ of the time, among them Sir Douglas Bader, Susan Hampshire, Sir Edward Heath, Yehudi Menuhin, Percy Thrower and the Queen Mother. 🐦

**Fig 4: Tanyard at Boughton Monchelsea comes with a two-bedroom cottage. £2.2m**



**Fig 5: Cobham Court at Bokesbourne also offers a modern barn conversion. £2.75m**



**Fig 6: Victorian Worth Court at Worth will appeal to keen gardeners. £1.45m**





# The case against a 'mansion tax'

Arabella Youens investigates the flaws in this controversial proposed measure

**T**HE idea for a 'mansion tax'—that is, an annual tax on properties worth £2 million or more—was initially proposed five years ago, but has since been adopted in various forms by the Labour Party, the SNP and the Green Party. Advocates claim it would raise between £1 billion and £2 billion a year. Although Labour has yet to confirm details, it has indicated it is looking to set the charge at £3,000 per annum for properties worth between £2 million and £3 million.

In a recent report for the Centre for Policy Studies, Lucian Cook of Savills Research establishes the principal flaws in the proposed tax: that it would yield insignificant revenues, target London homeowners in the majority, be expensive and complex to administer and take no account of the ability of the homeowner to pay. 'It's based on a crude gross, not net, calculation of wealth,' he explains.

Furthermore, any case for such a levy has been diminished by significant tax reforms introduced since it was first mooted. In 2009, Stamp Duty (SDLT) was levied at 4% on the sale of properties worth more than £2 million—that level was increased to 5% in April 2011 and then 7% in March 2012. Then, on December 3, 2014, the Chancellor announced new SDLT rates, which effectively mean that the average rate of tax paid on properties worth more than £2 million now exceeds 10%.

'That means that the tax paid on a house now being sold in south-west London for £2.5 million has increased by 405% since 2009,' calculates Mr Cook.

## Poor foundations

The proposed tax doesn't differentiate between those who have the means to pay and those who don't and it doesn't address the question of whether or not there is a mortgage on the property.

'A person owning two properties worth £1.9 million each with no mortgage debt would pay no tax, but, perversely, a person owning a single



**Made of money?: have the parties really thought through their proposals for a 'mansion tax'?**

property worth £2.1 million with a £1.5 million mortgage would be caught,' says Mr Cook.

## Listed-property owners

Under the current proposals, there's no allowance for the annual costs of upkeep of some of the country's most important listed buildings. As Dawn Carritt of Jackson-Stops & Staff points out, a 'mansion tax' will be particularly painful for those who live in properties that have been passed down through the family to owners who are asset-rich but cash-poor. 'And it'll discourage owners from investing in period outbuildings to keep them in good order.'

## Need to know

- 80% of affected properties are in London
- The proposals take no account of an individual's ability to pay the tax and would be based on a crude gross, not net, calculation of wealth
- The tax would be

expensive and complex to administer; valuations in this part of the market are inherently subjective

- However, it has mass appeal: a September 2014 poll by YouGov found that 72% of respondents supported the idea

## Administrative costs

It's anticipated that a 'mansion tax' would require homeowners who are potentially liable to the tax to obtain and pay for the cost of a valuation. Although it's relatively easy to compare like-for-like houses in London, when it comes to the country-house market, valuations are far more subjective and are really only established at the point of sale.

Valuations that come in close to the cut-off point of £2 million are likely to be reviewed by HMRC and, if the case is borderline, it seems inevitable that there would be a formal dispute, which would be costly to resolve.

## The unknown sums

We don't know how the charging structure of the tax will work for properties worth more than £3 million, but, in order to raise a gross revenue of £1.2 billion, Savills has calculated that the levy against properties worth between £3 million and £5 million would need to be in the order of £7,000 a year, rising to £125,000 a year for properties worth more than £20 million.

## Wider impact

The negative impact on property values would further erode revenues from other property taxes over the long term. Savills has calculated that SDLT revenue of at least £160 million would be lost each year due to the imposition of a 'mansion tax', with a further reduction of at least £25 million expected in Inheritance Tax (IHT) receipts. In simpler terms, this means £1 in every £6 raised by a 'mansion tax' would be lost in SDLT and IHT receipts.

## Foreign investors

Mr Cook concludes: 'It should be remembered that wealthy overseas investors operate in a particularly competitive global environment. Such a tax would send a strong message that these investors in the UK would be facing a punitive and uncertain tax regime—a message that poses perhaps the greatest risk of all.'



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## Fishing on the River Avon

**Wiltshire, £1.89 million**

Figheldean House, Figheldean

8 bedrooms, tennis court, fishing, 2.8 acres

Carter Jonas (01672 514916)

This pretty village lies on the banks of the River Avon, just north of Amesbury (with easy access to the A303). The house is Grade II listed and is presented in excellent condition following extensive internal refurbishment, which has resulted in a mix of contemporary and restored features.



## Narrowboat mooring on the Oxford Canal

**Oxfordshire, £1.4 million**

The Old Manor, Copredy

7 bedrooms, narrowboat mooring, 8 acres

Strutt & Parker (01295 297217)

The popular village of Copredy has a village store and post office and regular train services run from nearby Banbury to London Paddington. The house has a pretty Smallbone kitchen with a four-door Aga and the two large attic bedrooms would suit teenagers well. The garden leads down to the canal.

## Under £1 million



**Shropshire, £850,000**

Brockton Park, Shifnal

Savills (01952 239500)

The origins of this property date to the 16th century, but the house was extended in the 19th century. The current owner has developed the landscaped gardens and there is a garden room and a range of outbuildings that could be converted, subject to the usual consents.



**Dorset, £795,000**

Ashley House, West Stour

Jackson-Stops & Staff

(01747 850858)

This village lies in the Blackmore Vale and has an excellent farm shop. The house is in a conservation area and has shuttered windows on some aspects. Its coach house has been used as a studio and office.



**Cambridgeshire, £935,000**

Peakirk House, Peakirk

Norton Rickett (01780 782999)

This Grade II\*-listed house is focused on a superb kitchen/breakfast room with an Aga. There is a large conservatory overlooking the rear garden as well as a cobbled patio area for alfresco entertaining.



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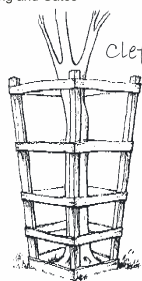
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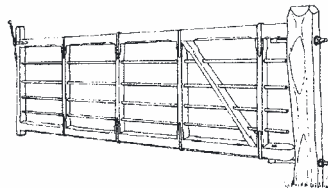
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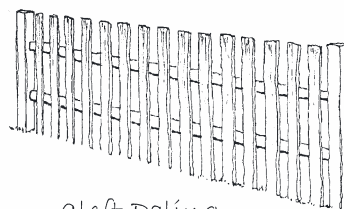


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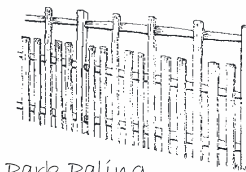
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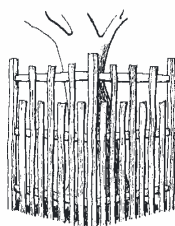


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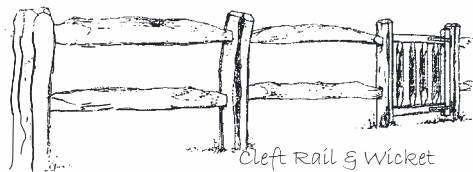


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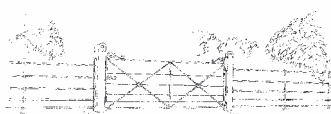
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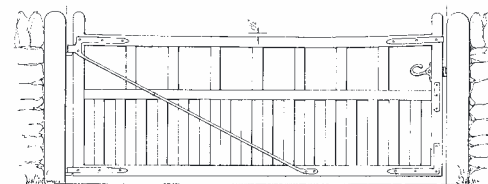
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# The Shaw thing

Michael Billington wonders if the current success of *Man and Superman* signals a Shaw renaissance



Ralph Fiennes and Indira Varma star in the National Theatre's scintillating *Man and Superman*

AT the end of the National Theatre's production of *Man and Superman*, the audience lets out a roar of delight of a kind I haven't heard for a long time. It's the sound of people thrilled to see a great play expertly delivered. It also signifies another stage in the endless rediscovery of George Bernard Shaw.

His plays are often deemed unfashionable: too talky, too static, too sexless for the modern age. Yet, whenever they are revived, critics and audiences alike are bowled over by their topicality and theatrical vitality.

So just what is it that makes Shaw seem so fresh? The first quality I would seize on is the musicality of his prose. Shaw himself once said that 'my method is founded upon music' and that Mozart had taught him that profound things could be said in a light way. Watching the National's production—in which Ralph Fiennes's John Tanner surrenders to the Life Force in the irresistible shape of Indira Varma's Ann Whitefield—I felt I was attending a spoken opera.

Shaw's prose not only has balance and harmony, it also ripples with wit. At one point, Tim McMullan as a Spanish

bandit named Mendoza proudly announces 'I am a brigand: I live by robbing the rich' to which Tanner promptly replies 'I am a gentleman: I live by robbing the poor. Shake hands'. The exchange gets a big laugh because the phrasing is perfect.

I suspect the audience also responds to the subversiveness of the idea; that, morally, there is no real difference between a Spanish brigand and an English gentleman. And, throughout *Man and Superman*, you see Shaw using the suppleness of his prose and the incandescence of his wit to explore his governing belief: that men are helpless in the face of all-conquering women.

Today, we may not easily accept that idea, but it doesn't matter. We rejoice in a sparkling sex comedy that has echoes of *Much Ado About Nothing* and are seduced by the Mozartian rhythms of Shaw's prose. When Tanner tells Ann 'I have a frightful feeling that I shall let myself be married because it is the world's will that you should have a husband', we hear in Mr Fiennes's fatalistic tones an exquisitely modulated melancholy.

I harp on Shaw's aesthetic appeal because it is so often

ignored. But, from the outset, he had the capacity to make audiences think by overturning expectations. In conventional comedy, the man pursues the woman: in *Man and Superman*, the reverse is true.

And in his very first play, *Widowers' Houses*, dating from 1892 and joyously revived at Richmond's Orange Tree last year, Shaw set about subverting the theatrical norm. When a young doctor and his prospective bride discover that her dowry derives from slum landlordism, you expect them both to renounce tainted money. In fact, Shaw's heroine, Blanche, quickly suppresses her qualms and her future husband is exposed as complicit in a corrupt system.

Part of Shaw's genius, in fact, was to create plays of ideas in which there are no obvious heroes or villains. He attacks the system, not the individual.

We saw that perfectly in Paul Miller's production of *Widowers' Houses*, in which Sartorius, the self-made landlord whose tenement blocks were filled to bursting with the London poor, was not treat-

ed as a moustache-twirling monster. Instead he became, in Patrick Drury's graceful performance, an eloquent apologist for what we now call compassionate conservatism.

It was a technique Shaw was to develop throughout his career, so that, by the time he got to *Saint Joan* in 1923, he was ➤

**Miraculous maid: Anne-Marie Duff in *Saint Joan***





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## **Belmond Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons unveils Dîner des Protégés**

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To celebrate 30 years of Belmond Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, Raymond Blanc is set to welcome back members of his brigade to host a series of Dîners des Protégés at his two-Michelin-starred Oxfordshire restaurant.

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- Ollie Dabbous: Wednesday 15 April
- Martin Burge: Wednesday 27 May
- Paul Heathcote MBE: Wednesday 24 June
- Adam Simmonds: Wednesday 15 July
- Eric Chavot: Wednesday 16 September
- Bruno Loubet: Wednesday 21 October
- Alan Murchison: Wednesday 25 November

Delighted to be reunited with his former colleagues, M. Blanc says: 'For a teacher, there is no greater joy and pride than to see one's students reach the peak of their chosen careers. Teaching and training is one of the most important things to me, I love to pass on what I know and I am very excited to be welcoming back my protégés to Belmond Le Manoir for this fantastic series of events.'

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The Dîner des Protégés evenings will include a Champagne Laurent-Perrier reception with canapés and a signature dinner with accompanying wines, coffee and petits fours. The evenings are priced at £225 per person.

For further information, visit [www.belmond.com/lemanoir](http://www.belmond.com/lemanoir) or telephone the events team on 01844 277484





As Sartorius, Patrick Drury gave a nuanced performance in the Orchard Theatre's stylish *Widowers' Houses*, Shaw's first play

capable of making a perfectly rational argument, on the part of the Inquisitor for the burning of the Maid of Orléans.

The case for Shaw as a dramatist rests on his word music, his wit and his ideas, but I would also claim that Shaw was anything but the heartless brainbox of popular caricature. He had the capacity to engender strong emotions in audiences. I've never forgotten the final moments of Sir Peter Hall's 2007 *Pygmalion* in which you felt Tim Pigott-Smith's Higgins had awoken too late to the vibrancy and resilience of Michelle Dockery's Eliza.

The idea of Shaw as a vegetarian celibate indifferent to the passions that drive ordinary men and women is also palpable nonsense. I would cite the example of *Heartbreak House*, which, written at the end of the First World War, is not just an early example of the state-of-the-nation play. It also includes a speech by Hesione Hushabye, the daughter of a former sea captain, which describes the transformative power of love: 'How delightful it makes waking up in the morning! How much better than the happiest dream! All life transfigured! No more



She's got it: Tim Pigott-Smith and Michelle Dockery in *Pygmalion*

wishing one had an interesting book to read, because life is so much happier than any book!' Could this have been written by a dramatist who lacked a heart?

I accept that you can make a case against Shaw. There are times when the fountain of talk overflows. He occasionally manipulates character to make an intellectual point such as the transformation of the dustman Doolittle in *Pygmalion* into a victim of middle-class morality, through a philanthropic bequest. And, in the later plays, Shaw's admiration for strong men and women leads to a dangerous infatuation with dictators.

But, in the very best of Shaw, there is a vivacity and energy that is truly liberating. To watch the duelling, in Simon Godwin's excellent *Man and Superman*, between Mr Fiennes's entrapped Tanner and Indira Varma's serpentine Ann is to see theatre at its most exhilarating.

It also reminds me of the story of the Oxford student who, in the 1960s, rashly asked the director, Frank Hauser, if he thought Shaw was coming back. 'I didn't know he'd been away' was Hauser's cool reply. 🐦



In *Heartbreak Hotel*, Shaw gives Hesione Hushabye (Vanessa Redgrave)—with Paul Scofield—a passionate description of love





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## The unconventional economist

Matthew Dennison relishes new insights into a complex man

### Biography

**Universal Man: the Seven Lives of John Maynard Keynes**  
Richard Davenport-Hines  
(William Collins, £18.99 \*£14.99)

**E**LEGANTLY, evocatively and movingly, biographer Richard Davenport-Hines has chronicled the life of the man he labels 'international statesman, uxorial husband and 20th-century philosopher-prince': John Maynard Keynes.

*Time* listed Keynes as one of the 100 most influential and important people of the past century, responsible for having 'saved capitalism'. But the economist, who revolutionised theories of macroeconomics by rejecting long-held assumptions about free markets and State non-interventionism, resists categorisation. He was also an informed art collector, a member of the Bloomsbury Group, a promoter of public arts and an ardent defender of the British landscape, which he correctly estimated as threatened by insensitive development.

Mr Davenport-Hines examines the extent to which Keynes's character and behaviour were shaped by Bloomsbury shibboleths: his belief in a leisured class of intelligent thinkers; his concern with individuals rather than masses or classes; his sexual unorthodoxy; and his impressive work ethic, which, argues the author, shortened his life.

'I believe,' Keynes claimed before the First World War, 'in Woman's Suffrage and the New Mathematical Tripas, in the abolition of the House of Lords and the Sodomy Acts, in cheap weekend tickets, in Heaven and Hell and *The Times* Book Club.'



The chapters focus on different aspects of Keynes's life

He was only partly facetious.

*Universal Man* celebrates a heroic vision of Keynes. The author presents his subject as a man whose optimism, romanticism, humanity and breadth of vision were atypical in a century characterised by cynicism, pessimism and self-interest. It is a persuasive encomium.

As with much current life writing, the present account eschews a strict chronological format in favour of a thematic approach. The book's seven chapters correspond to the varied roles or 'lives' Mr Davenport-Hines attributes to Keynes. 'He could—and did—do most things better than anyone else,' commented one of Keynes's colleagues at the end of his life. The seven chapters of *Universal Man* explain those 'things' as academic excellence, economic genius, public-spiritedness and civic-mindedness, connoisseurship, emotional liberalism and statesmanship (four years before his death, in 1942, Keynes received a life peerage).

The author suggests that the ability to compartmentalise one's life is a mark of intelligence and a skill mastered early on by Keynes. The book's structure therefore seeks to replicate something of Keynes's own omnivorous but clear-sighted outlook. It also serves the useful purpose of



affording the author sufficient space to discuss, for example, the minutiae of Keynesian economics as straight-forwardly as possible. For some readers, it may mean that the book's interest levels fluctuate.

Keynes was born in 1883 in Cambridge, the eldest of three children. His father was a university don, his mother a campaigner for social reform. By many standards, theirs was a serious household, shaped by traditions of religious dissent and political liberalism, but John and Florence Keynes were loving and supportive parents. Maynard, as he was known, won a scholarship to Eton. Afterwards, he followed a well-trodden path to King's College, Cambridge, returning there again after a brief period as a civil servant.

At university, as throughout his life, Keynes's interests were widespread and included philosophy and the Arts, in addition to economics. Keynes spent much of his career as a public figure, consulted by government ministers; books and journalism, notably his excoriating critique of the Treaty of Versailles, increased his prominence.

This is an accomplished and impressive biography. Ultimately, however, the reader comes not so much to know Keynes as to know about him.

### Fiction

#### Infidelities

Kirsty Gunn  
(Faber & Faber, £12.99 \*£11.69)

THE FRONT and back covers of this book show the floorplans of a house in which infidelities might happen—bedrooms, private alcoves, back stairs and passageways. But, strangely, these short stories are not set between walls. The whisperings and secrets escape into the open air, in New Zealand, London, the shires and the far north of Scotland.

That seems to be the point—even away from domesticity, in 'the great bare expanse of wintry brown and grey', Kirsty Gunn's women are imprisoned. Like the wolf on the road in one of her final stories, they long to leap across the central reservation, to go beyond the boundaries.

Females do all the telling in these tales, but most of them are not in charge. Fathers, boyfriends, husbands, a male cousin and a lesbian call the shots. Often drunk and boring—one unattractively blows into his handkerchief with a 'ghastly trumpeting and wheezing'—the males generally take the lead.

They tick off their wives for sitting with their legs apart and boss their way through car journeys until the wife longs for them to fall asleep—'all the time he'd been asleep she had loved it, just driving along the road and deciding which way to go'. Some allow their daughters to be abused, one by a man called Dick.

Roped in by lives and marriages that feel like heavy coats, these tales are about escape. Women planning it, doing it and sometimes not being able to do it. Like their thoughts, the writing sometimes chews away at itself and seems slow. But the telling of these tales, particularly the one written as a film played backwards, can, at times, be exciting.

Feelings of imprisonment in childhood, marriage and friendship are not confined to one sex, but many women will find these stories disconcertingly familiar.

Julia Wigan



## Fiction

### The White Umbrella

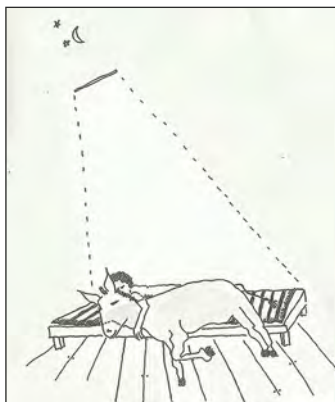
Brian Sewell (Illustrated by Sally Ann Lasson)

(Quartet, £9.99 \*£9.49)

WHY WOULDN'T anyone crave knowledge of Alexander the Great, Turkish folklore regarding storks or the singular advantages of banking with Coutts? Who wouldn't relish the image of Peter Breugel crossing the Alps 'to talk to Michelangelo', assurance that 'it was probably in a *caravanserai* that Jesus Christ was born' or—be warned—confirmation that a Silver Shadow is 'the plaything of plumbers and spivs'.

Fearful that curiosity, that most civilising of impulses, is endangered, these are the questions posed by Brian Sewell, erudite if recalcitrant art critic, educator and animal lover, in his first, witty work of fiction.

Pocket-sized, picaresque and charmingly illustrated, *The White*



Sally Ann Lasson's witty illustrations perfectly complement Brian Sewell's whimsical prose

*Umbrella* is the romantic story of Mr B, 'a wiry little man of fifty', and Pavlova. While filming a television programme about the riches of northern Pakistan, 'this kind of scholar gypsy' rescues a tiny, wounded donkey and names her after 'a beautiful Russian ballet dancer who died on the day that Mr B was born'.

Basic arithmetic (one of several authorial anathemas) makes him the same age as Mr Sewell

and sets the story in 1981.

Recounting an overland odyssey from Peshawar to Wimbledon, *The White Umbrella* is Mr Sewell's eloquent paean to caprice and expresses expiation for his long-ago failure to save just such a donkey.

Helplessly inquisitive and by instinct didactic, he embroiders an uplifting sequence of respectful social encounters across a canvas of edifying cultural information.

The Middle East, rendered in all its pluralistic glories with punctilious detail and beguiling, timely freshness, becomes the colourful backdrop for a tender elegy to ageing: 'We all change, and we go on changing till we die.'

As good as one fears, this portrait miniature is an artful, disarming corrective to the small-minded and simplistic. Wonderful, in its strictest sense.  
*Caroline Jackson*



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## Horticulture

### First Ladies of Gardening

Heidi Howcroft (Illustrated by Marianne Majerus)  
(Frances Lincoln, £20 \*£18)

### Women Garden Designers

Kristina Taylor  
(Garden Art Press, £35 \*£31.50)



**Pioneer: Lady Tollemache**

'DO NOT DESCRIBE me as an English flower lady,' urges garden designer and writer Lady Mary Keen, when the author approaches her about inclusion in *First Ladies of Gardening*. There is no danger of that as Heidi Howcroft delves into Lady Mary's horticultural background (traditional enough at the start, via her green-fingered mother-in-law). She describes how this designer-writer has combined a certain intellectual rigour with great sensitivity to the genius of the place, to create an absorbing, very green private haven around her Cotswolds former rectory. It is one of 14 'case studies' of women who have achieved something in the gardens they have made, or continued to develop, within a time frame of the past 60 years.

Many of the featured gardens are already well known. The first half of the book is devoted to 'Pioneers of Design', including the late Rosemary Verey's influential revivalist work at Barnsley House. Gertrude Jekyll, as pioneer, is represented by Rosamund Wallinger's faithful re-creation of her plans for Upton Grey Manor, which has rightly elevated Mrs Wallinger to queen bee status



**Niki de Saint Phalle's *The Empress* towers over the Tarot Garden**

among Hampshire gardeners.

The author states in the foreword the importance of the amateur in English garden-making, yet it is interesting to reflect how many of the women included here have carved out successful (second) careers on the back of their initial interest in their home turf. Beth Chatto is among them, although, as a former florist and professional nurserywoman, 'amateur' status cannot really apply. And certainly, Beatrix Havergal (1901–80) and her girls at the Waterperry School of Horticulture were in the realm of professional gardening at its most meticulous and skilful level.

The second half of the book is subtitled 'New Directions', and I wonder how *grandes dames* Xa Tollemache and Helen Dillon feel about being included on this side of the dividing line. The other gardens in this section are less familiar, but deserve to be known better. Sue Whittington's north London garden is an inspiring demonstration of what can be achieved in a limited urban space and the chapter on Rosanna James's North Yorkshire garden includes an image of Himalayan blue poppies mingling in the shade with claret aquilegias and white *Allium* Mount Everest that made me gasp with envy and admiration.

Mrs Howcroft writes engagingly, despite covering well-trodden ground and there is much to enjoy and learn from the glorious photographs by the talented Marianne Majerus.

In contrast, *Women Garden Designers 1900 to the Present*,

by Scottish garden historian Kristina Taylor, is not quite such a coffee-table contender. It is, however, a fascinating whistle-stop review of 31 women who have made their mark on the practice of garden design, each designer accorded her own chapter.

As in Mrs Howcroft's book, Gertrude Jekyll is the first to appear, but this is because she was born in 1843 and the author has adopted a strictly chronological approach. Vita-Sackville West, Rosemary Verey and Beth Chatto all feature, but they take their place in an international cast that gives equal importance to the Australian Edna Walling, the South African Joane Pim and the Brazilian Isabel Duprat.

Inevitably, any finite list will raise questions about those designers who didn't make it onto it, but the author has ranged both aesthetically and geographically to push into the spotlight many great names that deserve more recognition in this country.

A Chelsea garden by contemporary British designer Jinny Blom has been given the front page, but I wonder how many readers are familiar with the insane land art of Niki de Saint Phalle or the futuristic creations of Petra Blaisse. From Mien Ruys (1904–99), the internationally influential Dutch designer who worried that her pioneering use of railway sleepers had been misused in 1,000 suburban gardens, to Teresa Moller, who creates gardens of indigenous plants in Chile, this book expands the reader's horticultural horizons in unexpected ways.

Jodie Jones

## Fiction

### A Place Called Winter

Patrick Gale  
(Tinder Press, £16.99 \*£15.29)

THE PROSPECT of a new Patrick Gale, whose trademark is to combine unusual characters with an interesting, contemporary English setting, is always cheering. Sensitivity and goodness is foremost in *A Place Called Winter*, but the historic setting—early-20th-century Canada—is a new departure, and may have provided him with his best book yet.

As a child, he was intrigued by the awkward silence surrounding his mother's 'Cowboy Grandpa', who lived in a log cabin, knew Indians and owned the huge pair of bearskin mitts in the dressing-up box. What is known is that Harry Cane was an affluent, if indolent young man who mysteriously abandoned a comfortable home, wife and young child for a bleak prairie home—still exists, although Winter is now a ghost town.

In this epic novel, he has Harry, like many unsatisfactorily married men of that era, risking an affair that, if discovered, would end in disgrace and prison. An unsympathetic brother-in-law forces him to leave the country, so he joins the Canadian Emigration, through which 160 acres of prairie land could be had in exchange for three years' work.

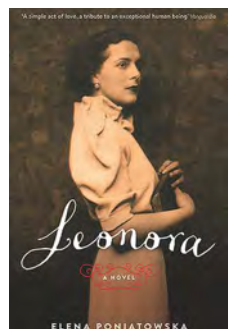
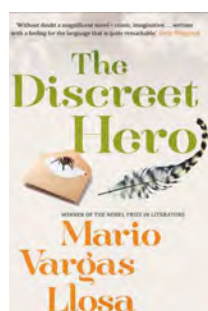
For a while, Harry is in another sort of hell: a cultureless existence of physical deprivation and crushing labour under a terrifying taskmaster. Then, he's rescued by neighbours Paul and Petra Slaymaker, who have also come to the prairies under a cloud; he feels pleased with his work and he falls in love, although this contentment proves precarious.

Mr Gale often uses autobiographical detail to good effect; here, he has excelled himself with the historical detail, resulting in a beautifully written, satisfying story that deserves to be a bestseller.

Kate Green



## Matilda Bathurst chooses six new novels



### **A Spool of Blue Thread** **Anne Tyler** **(Knopf, £18.99)**

No one does family sagas quite like Anne Tyler, the veteran American novelist known for portrayals of everyday life in her home state of Baltimore. In her 20th novel, she invites the reader to inhabit the grand and sprawling home of the Whitshank family, setting the scene for four generations of domestic drama.

### **The Discreet Hero** **Mario Vargas Llosa** **(Faber & Faber, £20 \*£18)**

What does it take to be a hero? This new novel by the winner of the 2010 Nobel Prize in Literature, knits together the lives of two modern Peruvians who refuse to keep quiet and simply profit from the system, taking their destinies into their own hands.

### **The Girl in the Red Coat** **Kate Hamer** **(Faber & Faber, £12.99 \*£11.69)**

This astonishing debut novel takes a simple premise—the disappearance of a child—and spins it into an intricate personal journey. Told from the point of view of the mother and her abducted daughter, it speeds along with the pace of a thriller and some of the otherworldly quality of fantasy.

### **Leonora** **Elena Poniatowska** **(Serpent's Tail, £12.99 \*£11.69)**

Both the renowned novelist Elena Poniatowska and the Surrealist painter Leonora Carrington sought refuge in Mexico to escape the strictures of an upper-class upbringing. Coinciding with a major retrospective at Tate Liverpool, Poniatowska's blend of fact and fiction is no less extraordinary than the life of the artist herself.

### **The Evening Chorus** **Helen Humphreys** **(Serpent's Tail, £11.99 \*£10.79)**

When James Hunter is shot down during his first RAF mission, his experience of the Second World War is over before it has even started. As he waits out the war in a German prison camp, he starts to study the nesting redstarts, creating a lyrical narrative about loss, love and the natural world.

### **The Architect's Apprentice** **Elif Shafak** **(Viking, £14.99 \*£12.99)**

This exuberant blend of fact and fiction from one of Turkey's most important female novelists imagines the adventures of a young apprentice to the legendary architect Mimar Sinan, whose buildings came to define 16th-century Istanbul.



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## Turning the page

Thirty years after his death, Russell Page is an enigmatic figure. Helena Attlee welcomes an exhibition that sheds new light, casting him as the first modern garden designer

**R**USSELL PAGE was a master of modern garden design. His client list was long, international and elite, and *The Education of a Gardener*, his book on garden design, is still a seminal text. Since his death 30 years ago, very little has been done to celebrate this distinguished career and many of his landscapes have been altered beyond recognition. The opening of the Garden Museum's exhibition will shine light on this obscure figure, finally overturning his definition of himself as 'the most famous garden designer no one has ever heard of'.

*Courtesy of the Garden Museum, RHS; Russell Page Archive*

On display will be a wonderful mix of material from private and public collections in Europe and America, combined with items drawn from Page's own archive. Since his death, Page's personal papers have been housed in Belgium by his close friends, the de Belders. The family recently decided to deposit them with the Garden Museum, thus making a magnificent contribution to Britain's first



Page often worked in northern Italy, where he took this photograph of the terraces he had designed below Villa Silvio Pellico, near Turin



Russell Page, aged 39

archive of modern garden design.

The exhibition is a perfect demonstration of the purpose of this new archive, which kicks back against past carelessness, challenging our tendency to lose vital documents connected to the design of modern gardens and demonstrating the insight that carefully conserved plans, notes, photographs and even account books can give into a designer's working practice.

For exhibition curator Russell Clark, the archive's arrival has been a portal to Page's studio. Among a sea of papers, he has found plans for gardens to surround many of the largest country

houses in Europe and America, places where Page would be invited to settle comfortably into a spare bedroom, returning repeatedly until his job was done.

The plans for more than 500 projects realised over a career spanning nearly 50 years are now safely lodged in the archive. Page's work never became

formulaic and so each project has a different lesson to teach us. Take the gardens of Villa Silvio Pellico and Villar Perosa, both close to Turin in northern Italy. The first is a tightly written reinterpretation of the Renaissance terraced garden into something unique and intrinsically modern. A few miles down the

### Join COUNTRY LIFE in Russell Page's Italian gardens

Our writers Helena Attlee and David Wheeler will be hosting a unique COUNTRY LIFE tour of private gardens in Piedmont in September, exploring some of Page's most famous landscapes and those of his former pupil, Paolo Pejrone (*Town & Country*, March 11). For more information, contact Boxwood Tours (01341 241717; [www.boxwoodtours.co.uk](http://www.boxwoodtours.co.uk))





road, we find Page abandoning this overtly architectural approach to create a sinuous curve of naturalistic planting through a river valley.

By juxtaposing plans with photographs and letters, drawings, notebooks and manuscript pages, Mr Clark has created an exhibition that is, in the words of the museum's director Christopher Woodward, 'an essay towards understanding Russell Page'. The initial element of any understanding must come from biography: here it begins with a child in love with plants, and is fleshed out with reminiscences

from people who knew him and photographs taken at every stage of his life. Consequently we are soon familiar with Page's laconic, long-legged figure, sometimes idle, but more often deep in conversation with a client or engrossed in planting, a cigarette always in his mouth.

Every designer must find their own method of articulating what they want to say and, as he sifted through the archive, Mr Clark learned that Page would often begin work by making a preliminary sketch of the garden in the wider landscape, as if thinking himself into the site. Once he had an idea

**Page's planting in Battersea Park for the 1951 Festival of Britain included crimson Floribunda roses and 20,000 tulips, chosen to raise the national spirit in postwar Britain**

for the design, he would draw it out again and again, obsessively exploring it with his pencil.

His system of making a measured drawing and working up a formal plan in the privacy of his studio set him apart from other designers of his generation. They were more likely to work through a plan on site, staking out the ground and making any adjustments by eye. By highlighting this distinction, the exhibition captures a watershed in the history of garden design, with Page forging the blueprint for what it means to be a garden designer today.

*'The Education of a Gardener: The Life & Work of Russell Page 1906-1985' will be at the Garden Museum, 5, Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 from March 25 to June 21 2015 (020-7401 8865; [www.gardenmuseum.org.uk](http://www.gardenmuseum.org.uk)). Closed the first Monday of each month.*

**Next week: Julie Brook**



This series of pools, created by Page in the valley below Gianni and Marella Agnelli's house in Villar Perosa near Turin, is today encircled by mature planting

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# Paris in the springtime

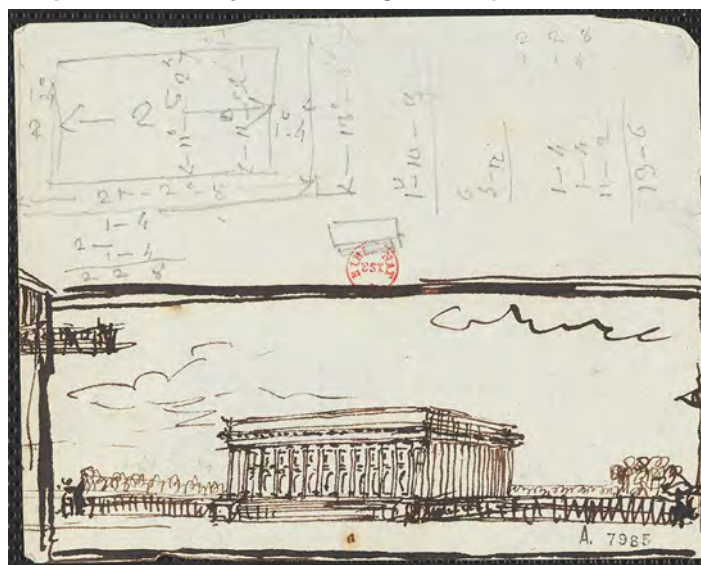
The work of a futuristic monument designer and a swagger portraitist in non-swagger mode will number among the more than 1,000 drawings at Paris's Salon du Dessin this month



Fig 1 above: Boullée's unexecuted cenotaph for Newton. Fig 2 below: Brongniart study for the Paris Bourse

Of all the collecting specialities that come under the blanket heading of 'drawings', the one that seems most self-contained is architecture. Architectural drawings can occasionally blend into topography, and are obviously kin to Piranesi-like fantasy, but perhaps because, in them, the functional is generally more important than the decorative, they may seem rather lacking in emotion.

However, those who take a closer look will generally find a great deal of interest—and often decoration, too. The first collectors of master drawings for their own sakes were professional artists and, naturally, architects have long been collectors of their predecessors. In a similar spirit, since its foundation in the 17th century, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France has collected architectural drawings, the first French institution to do so. Now fully inventoried, deciphered, classified and digitised, this collection



is to be given greater prominence, beginning with a selection of significant sheets that is being shown at the Salon du Dessin in Paris from March 25 to 30 ([www.salondudessin.com](http://www.salondudessin.com)).

No one could accuse Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728–99) of lack of emotion in his design for a cenotaph for Sir Isaac Newton, 1784; it is a most effective example of

what his detractors sneered at as 'architecture parlante'. The 15½in by 25½in grey-wash elevation as seen at night in the loan show seems far ahead of its time (Fig 1). The unexecuted building was to be 500ft high and has a simple-seeming geometric form, with its great globe and plinth wreathed in bands of trees. The dome would have had something of the effect



Fig 3: Chalk study by Tiepolo. With Marty de Cambiaire

of a planetarium, with the sun shining through star-like apertures.

As the Salon is held in the former Paris Bourse, built by Boullée's pupil Alexandre-Théodore Brongniart (1739–1813) and now known by his name, it is only fitting that the loan also includes a little sheet of his pen and pencil studies for it (Fig 2).

This year, there will be 39 exhibitors at the Salon, a happy mixture of Parisian and overseas dealers, and the range will be from the Renaissance or earlier to the 21st century. Last year's event attracted more than 13,000 visitors and achieved very satisfactory sales. It would be no surprise if figures were up this time. Of all the fairs that I attend, this one attracts the most enthusiastic and probably most knowledgeable collectors and the organisers make a point of welcoming students as well as proven buyers. There is also a display of the winners of the Daniel and Florence Guerlain





Fig 4 above: Italian 1780s landscape by Thomas Jones. With David Tunick. Fig 5 below: Boldini watercolour. With Galerie Terades

Foundation prize for contemporary drawing and a stimulating programme of talks and discussions.

As usual, major institutions in or close to Paris are holding exhibitions alongside the Salon and those that are not open to the public can be visited by groups arranged through the Salon organisers.

As it is one of my favourite places in Paris, I shall certainly visit the Fondation Custodia, 121, rue de Lille, home of the great drawings collection formed by the Dutch art historian Frits Lugt. On this occasion, the foundation is not exhibiting its own drawings, but a selection from the exceptional collection of the Städel Museum Frankfurt by Italian Renaissance masters. Opening on March 21, the show of almost 90 masterpieces by Raphael, Titian, Michelangelo, Correggio and many others will run to June 21. Along with it, the foundation is showing 'Ink Circus', drawings by a contemporary artist, Gèr Boosten.

Among others holding linked shows are the Cité de la Céramic, Sèvres, the Émile Hermès private collection, the Musée Victor Hugo, the Musée Condé, Chantilly, the Musée Rodin and the Musée Nationale d'Histoire Naturelle.

It will be a relief that the Salon itself is no larger, as there will be so much to enjoy. Here, I show a small but varied selection garnered from the pre-publicity material and presented in chronological order. With Day & Faber from London is a pleasing if



unassuming 8½in by 12½in brown-ink and brown-wash drawing by Gillis Neyts (about 1618—about 1687), an artist from Brabant who worked principally in the Meuse Valley, but also spent time in Spain. Is this a venerable Spanish olive tree the men were harvesting until one was distracted by a passing girl?

When the Seven Years' War ruined Venice for artists, Giambattista Tiepolo (1696–1770) also gravitated to Spain, where he died. Marty de Cambiaire has a 16½in by 11½in black and red chalk study with white heightening showing a seated male nude in the pose of a slave or prisoner (Fig 3).

The Welsh artist Thomas Jones (1742–1803) spent his formative years in Italy, where he produced some of the most remarkable landscapes of the time. His 8½in by 14¾in *Landscape with sunrise on the Bay of Pozzuoli* is not one

of his most innovative works, but it is beautifully atmospheric (Fig 4). It dates from the 1780s, is in oil paint on paper laid on canvas and will be brought from New York by David Tunick.

Like his friends Sargent and Helleu, the portrait painter Giovanni Boldini (1842–1931) was a master of swagger. Thus it will be a surprising pleasure to see a sketchy, splashy 11½in by 14½in watercolour dating from about 1905, which is with Galerie Terades. It shows fishing boats in a muddy creek at low tide, and shows that even Society painters take holidays (Fig 5).

In 1887, the peripatetic Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) spent six months on Martinique and the resultant paintings attracted van Gogh to him when it was exhibited in Paris, and Theo van Gogh showed some of them at the

Goupil gallery where he worked. Jean Luc Baroni has the 13½in by 9¼in *Nègreries Martiniques* in gouache, watercolour, pen, dark-blue ink and gold paint, which was painted after his return to France (Fig 6).

This leads neatly to a 13in by 9½in portrait head of Degas by Michel Manzi (1849–1915) in pencil, pen, watercolour and gouache. Manzi was in charge of printing and photography at Goupil before setting up his own gallery, where he promoted not only his friend Degas, but also Toulouse-Lautrec—whose portrait, incidentally, was painted by Boldini. 🐾

**Next week Strong as oak**

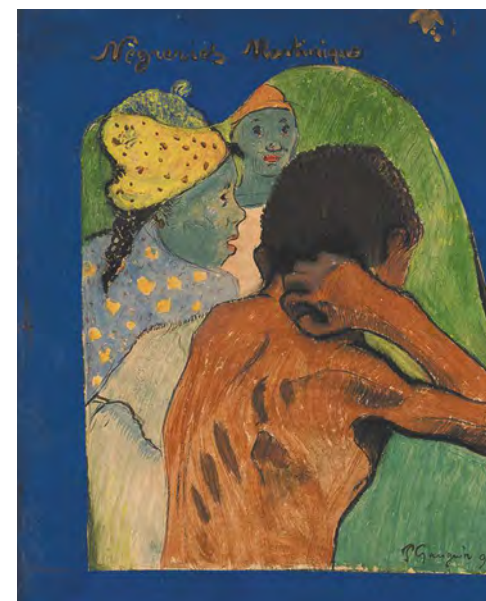


Fig 6: Gauguin's *Nègreries Martiniques*. With Jean Luc Baroni



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**B**ETWEEN the Brighton Pairs and Teams weekends at the English Bridge Union's Summer Festival, I had had the somewhat gruelling pleasure of riding the South Downs Way on my mountain bike. Physically exhausted, but mentally refreshed, as I returned to the East Sussex town originally known as the ancient settlement of 'Brighthelmstone', the Teams saw some fascinating deals and I'm pleased to say your columnist's team emerged victorious among the 121 entries.

Bidding and making Six Clubs was some goal on our first Brighton Teams deal (no, not at our table: we beat Three Spades doubled by two tricks).

**Dealer North**  
**Both vulnerable**

♠ A 9 8  
♥ A 3  
♦ A 9 2  
♣ A 9 4 3 2

♠ Q 10 2  
♥ K J  
♦ K J 10 7 4 3  
♣ Q 8

**South**   **West**   **North**   **East**  
1NT(1)   Pass   1NT(1)   Pass

2♣(2)   2♦   Pass   2♠  
3♣(3)   3♠   6♣(4)   End

(1) 15-17.  
(2) Stayman—a request for four-card majors, in the quest for a Heart fit.  
(3) Unclear whether this was forcing or competitive. As you see, South intended it as competitive.  
(4) But North had other ideas. He loved his hand, with its amazing Club fit and was expecting short Spades opposite.

West led the two of partner's Spades versus the ambitious slam. Can you see the way home, looking at all 52 cards? Win the Ace and ruff a Spade. Play King of Clubs and a Club to the Ace, drawing trumps, ruff a third Spade to eliminate the suit, then play a Heart to the (Knave and) Ace and a second Heart.

When East plays low on the second Heart (wouldn't he rise with the King if he had it?), duck the Heart, playing West for his actual King-Knave doubleton. West wins, but has only Diamonds left. You run his (say) Knave to your Queen, cash the promoted Queen of Hearts, throwing dummy's remaining low Diamond, cross to the Ace of Diamonds and chalk up your not

unfortunate slam.

Our second contract was far less ambitious, but the foul trump split put it in severe danger. Partner Alex Allfrey showed the way home.

**Dealer North**  
**East-West vulnerable**

♠ A 4  
♥ K 3  
♦ A 10 8 6  
♣ A Q 10 9 6

♠ Q J 10  
♥ Q 10 7 6 5 4  
♦ J 9  
♣ 8 7

**South**   **West**   **North**   **East**  
1♥   Pass   2♦   Pass  
2♠(1)   Pass   2NT   Pass  
3♣(2)   Pass   3♥(3)   Pass  
4♥(4)   End

(1) Fourth Suit Forcing—to game.  
(2) Still worried about Spades for Notrumps, and also interested in a possible Club slam—South loves his minor-suit honours in partner's long suits.  
(3) Now almost certainly two-two-four-five.  
(4) Prefers the five-two Heart fit to Three Notrumps, given the known tenuous Spade situation.

West led the Queen of Spades, declarer ducking, and switched to the eight of Clubs, to the nine, Knave and King. At trick three, declarer crossed to the King of Hearts and the shocking six-nil trump split was revealed, East throwing a Spade.

Playing perfectly, declarer cashed the Ace of Spades, crossed to the King of Diamonds and ruffed a Spade with dummy's small Heart. He crossed to the Queen of Diamonds (seeing West's Knave), then led over to dummy's Ace of Clubs, West again following.

Declarer had picked off West's precise shape and now knew he was down to five Hearts. He led any one of dummy's cards and played his remaining Diamond. West ruffed and led a Heart to declarer's eight. Declarer now exited with the nine of Hearts and West, holding Queen-ten-small remaining, could only win the ten, but lead from his Queen-small to declarer's Ace-Knave.

Ten tricks and game made—declarer restricting his losers to two Hearts (only) and one Spade. Yes, Three Notrumps (the contract at the other table) would have been rather easier. But then there'd have been no story.

# Crossword

A prize of £15 in book tokens will be awarded for the first correct solution opened. Solutions must reach Crossword No 4372, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU by **Tuesday, March 24**. UK entrants only.

## ACROSS

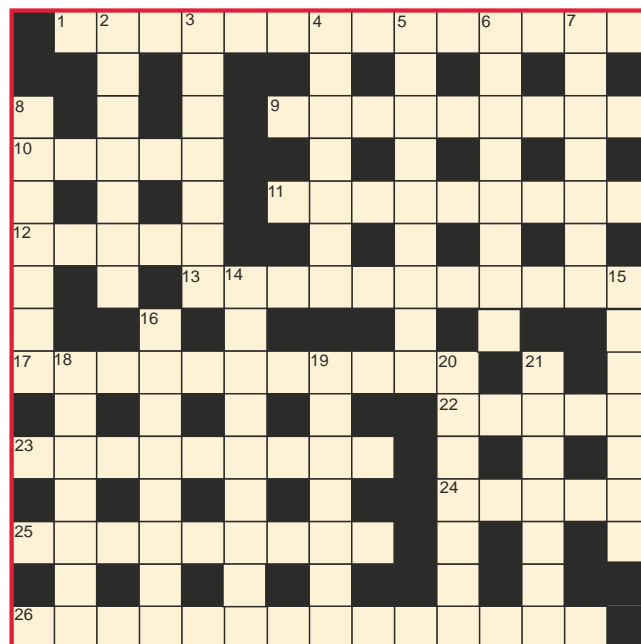
- Trickery at zoo? (6, 8)
- Response of brat to tooth disorder (9)
- Eccentric route (5)
- Chap with brown headgear in city (9)
- Casual worker joins me in rhythms (5)
- Learn when laid into debate for dependent (11)
- Love to leave college with a report saying how I persevered initially to gain award (11)
- Spy ghost (5)
- Casual search by council for sports equipment (9)
- Speak in lively fashion that food is about right (5)
- It's gratis to resolve inflammation (9)
- Deliberately contrary person is lawyer with the client from hell? (6, 8)

## DOWN

- Model it in fashion of yesteryear (3-4)
- Relative energy is quirk caused by motion (7)
- Attack leather tankard (7)
- Western dish? (9)
- Record to go up in country (8)
- At most a way to openings (7)
- Hardy girl joins Hosea shortly as one to receive guests (7)
- Love that artist meets politicians in places of worship (9)
- Part of wig delivered by courier to warehouses (4, 3)
- To infect party with bits of paper (8)
- Bravery of one half of couple to surmount anger (7)
- Take ride around to small house going up in close order (7)
- Addendum affirmative sign that fashionable to be spiritual (7)
- Policeman gives me auction item flyer (2-5)

4372

TAIT



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SOLUTION TO 4371 (Winner will be announced in two weeks' time)  
ACROSS: 7, Sundries; 9, Brooch; 10, Bail; 11, Spokeshave; 12, Teaser; 14, Tolerant; 15, Stepping-stone; 17, Claptrap; 19, Reefer; 21, Mastermind; 22, Data; 23, Musket; 24, Tenacity.  
DOWN: 1, Humane; 2, Idol; 3, Airstrip; 4, Abseil; 5, Botherome; 6, Scavenge; 8, Sporting print; 13, Sweepstake; 15, Syllabus; 16, Strident; 18, Rarity; 20, Estate; 22, Dock.

Winner of 4369 is Dotty Croomie, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire.



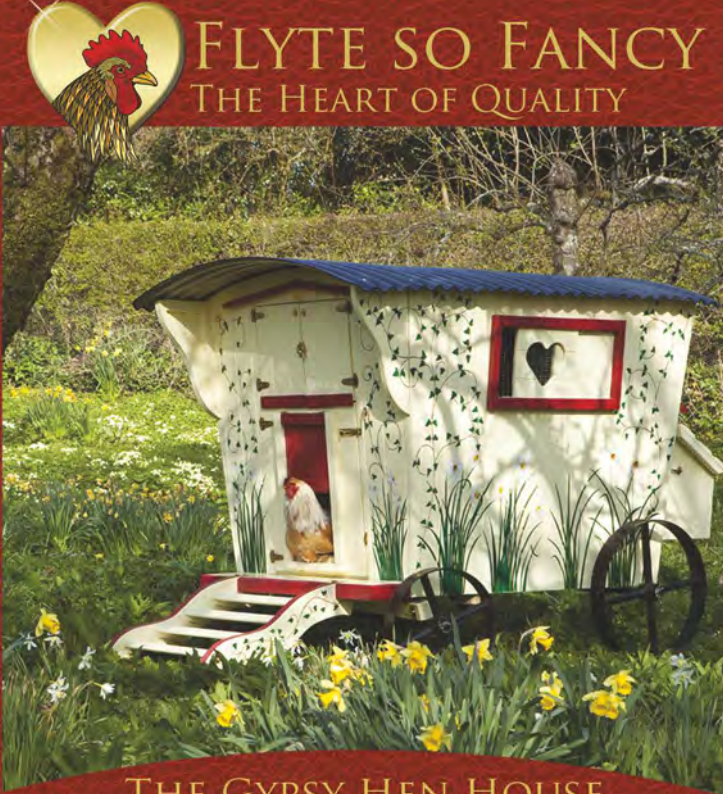
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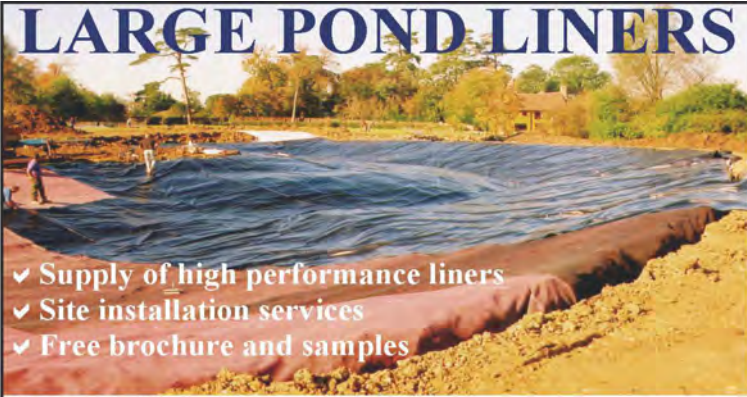
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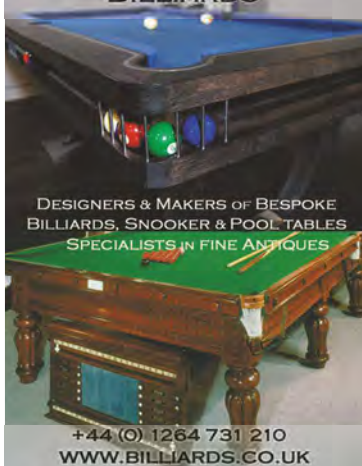


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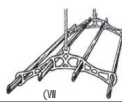
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# Lost in space

ON the way home, I pass a shop window in which there's a handwritten message on a large board, which is angled for maximum attention: 'Dear Mrs [name]. Will you *please* come and collect your pictures.' The board conveys a loud note of desperation.

My advice would be to put the abandoned pictures in the window with a price tag, which is how I once found a photograph of myself in a wedding dress. The photo was a present, but its glass had been broken, so I'd taken it for repair—and then never given it another thought. Two years later, it caught my eye as I passed by and, on entering the shop, I asked how long it had been for sale. Months, they said wearily, before selling it to me. Zam would love the same opportunity if he ever saw his tailcoat, borrowed from his father, and still in a dry cleaner's somewhere. We think.

I would not, however, forget if I'd bought a house. Or an apartment. Unlike Sarah Brightman, 'the world's biggest selling soprano' (according to her website), who told a journalist from *The*

*Sunday Times* that she'd bought a flat in Manhattan on the internet and only remembered the fact while staying in a New York hotel, when she suddenly thought: 'What am I doing... I've got an apartment here.' And off she went to collect the keys.

Miss Brightman is in the news because she's spent a reported £35 million on training to become an astronaut and will spend 10 days in space this September. Once on the International Space Station (where she hopes to perform), she will be responsible for something to do with pressure, but she's not allowed to discuss this. The training involves arduous 16-hour days at Star City in Russia, where she's spent much of the past two years.

I tell Alfie that I might become an astronaut because Miss Brightman is a bit older than me and she's got a shocking memory, so... well, the similarities end there, but I feel it's enough to go on. He snorts derisively: 'You can't even turn on the television.' This is entirely true, but not because I'm not an astronaut in the making. 'But Jade,' who's much

younger and brighter than me and who sometimes dogsits, 'can't turn it on either,' I protest.

When Olive left for university, she taped a set of instructions to the table under the set. They

**‘I don’t actually want to go into space. I don’t even like going in a lift’**

fill an A4 sheet with a first line that reads 'How to turn on/off'. When I tell you that this has nothing to do with simply pressing the top-right button on your remote control but has a lot to do with 'inputs' and that there are three lines of instructions before you get to 'How to change channels', you can see that life has become unbearably complicated.

I read out some of the essential mental requirements for trainee astronauts and suggest these are not out of the question: persistent thought processes

(persistent definitely, consistent not so much), 'you have self-informed trust' (yes, I trust Alfie to switch channels and have got him out of bed to do so. This is self-informed). 'You are under 6ft 3in' (Zam's not coming then) and have a 'Can Do!' attitude. 'You are curious.' Yes, I'm curious that Miss Brightman is made of the right stuff even though she forgets when she's bought a flat.

Mind you, some of this is for the people who are being sent on a one-way mission to Mars. I don't want to go to Mars. On reflection, even considering my suitability, I don't actually want to go into space. I remember I don't even like going in a lift.

'Can someone turn that down,' comes a shout from Zam, who's on the phone. I pick up the remote and press the minus volume button. 'No!' they all chorus from the sofa as the screen goes blank. 'This isn't logical,' I say crossly as I flounce out of the room. 'You are a problem solver.' Yes, I am. Later that night, I turn the television off. At the socket in the wall.

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